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ELEMENTS

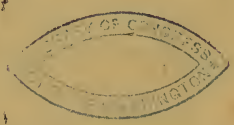
OF

POLITICAL SCIENCE.

By JOHN CRAIG, Esq..

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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ELEMENTS

OF

POLITICAL SCIENCE.

BOOK II. CONTINUED.

CHAPTER III.

Of the National Defence.

As defence against external enemies is one of the original causes of social combination, so, in more advanced conditions of mankind, it continues to occupy a great part of the attention of every government. The passions of nations, like those of individuals, are constantly betraying them into acts of injustice: the desire of power, of distinction, or of wealth, is a perpetual incitement to concealed injuries, or open aggressions: and to guard against the one and repel the other, a public force must be maintained in a condition fitted to overawe the enemies of the country. A watchful eye is kept on the actions of every state

conceived, from interest or ambition, to be hostilely disposed; alliances are formed with other governments threatened by the same dangers, or actuated by similar views and apprehensions: but all these precautions would be ineffectual, unless a military force were provided, sufficient to assert the national rights, to succour the national allies, and to vindicate the national honour.

In forming such a military establishment, the state has a right to call for the services of all her citizens. The public protection, too important to be committed to casual patriotism, can be safely confided only to the joint efforts of all, according to a system previously arranged and universally understood. Nor is there any hardship in compelling each individual to perform his military duty. The security which arises from the social combination being common to all, participation in such measures as are indispensable to the enjoyment of this security, must also extend to every citizen. He who should refuse the performance of this essential duty, could have no title to the advantages derived from the exertions of others; having contributed nothing to the common defence, he could have no claim to public protection. Every exemption, except in cases where military service is incompatible with other public duties, being an attempt to procure the advantages of society without contributing to its support, is repugnant to the principles of civil equality; and, consequently, the service of each

individual can have no other limits, than the services of the other citizens, and the necessities of the state.

But though every person is bound to contribute to the general defence, there are two ways in which he may perform this duty. He may either prepare himself to exercise the profession of arms, when his services are called for; or he may contribute such a sum of money as will enable the sovereign to hire a soldier in his place. When each citizen serves in rotation, the military force is a national militia; when soldiers are hired by the state, it is a mercenary, or, if they are kept in constant pay, a standing, army. Either of these modes of providing for the public defence may be rendered perfectly just; each seems to be attended with some peculiar advantages and inconveniences; and perhaps it will be found that the best military establishment is that in which both are conjoined.

SECTION I.

Of a National Militia.

Were our attention to be confined exclusively to the most secure defence against foreign subjugation, it is probable that we should give a decided preference, over every other species of military force, to a well-regulated militia. Professional soldiers, at least as standing armies have hitherto been constituted, are taken chiefly from the most idle and profligate of the people; from those who have no families to protect, or who, abandoning this duty, leave them to misery and want: they consist, in a great proportion, of men, in whom many of the most essential virtues are extinct, and many of the most destructive vices confirmed by long indulgence. After entering into the army, soldiers, sedulously kept apart, by frequent changes of quarters, from intimate connection with their friends and countrymen, are taught to consider themselves as a distinct order, with views and interests different from those of their fellow-citizens. It is not surely from such men that efforts of patriotism may reasonably be expected. Their natural courage, in itself a mere animal impulse, can be supported only by acquaintance with danger, by fear of punishment, or, in particular regiments

already signalized, by the desire of preserving that character for valour in which each soldier claims his share. From such motives a certain degree of exertion may be confidently expected. An army so constituted, particularly if inured to danger by former campaigns, will usually do what is looked upon as its duty: but if danger approach in new and untried forms, if something highly perilous must be achieved, if the soldiers must be devoted to almost certain destruction for the safety of their country, higher considerations, more elevated sentiments, must support the hero in the arduous struggle.

Such generous self-devotion may more reasonably be expected from a militia contending for every thing dear to man; for their property, their families, their liberty, and their country. Unacquainted with danger, they may be appalled by its first approach; unaccustomed to the tumult and alarms of war, they may for a time be confounded and dismayed; without that confidence in themselves which arises from experience, they may be exposed to sudden and disgraceful panics: but they will soon recollect the cause in which they are engaged, they will return with fresh ardour to the charge, and seek to efface their former disgrace by merited glory. On great and decisive occasions, where ordinary exertions and ordinary intrepidity would be unavailing, they will lose all sense of personal danger in attachment to their country; and that

valour will be irresistible which is heightened by enthusiasm and founded immoveably on virtue.

The histories of Greece and Rome (and it surely is allowable to refer to ancient nations in illustration of sentiments which are of all times and of all countries) furnish abundant proofs of the energy of free citizens fighting in defence of their country. After making every allowance for the superiority of the Greeks in arms, and for the exaggerations of their historians, enough will remain, in their arduous struggles against the Persians, to excite our highest admiration: nor can we read of the bloody and pertinacious wars between the militia of Rome and that of the Italian states, without being impressed with the comparative futility of defence resting entirely on mercenary troops.

In modern times, the invention of gun-powder, the improvement of fortification, and various changes in the military art, have, no doubt, diminished the advantages which militias derived from superior valour and more entire devotion to the cause of their country: yet many situations must still occur in which the spirit of the troops may disappoint the calculations, and overpower the combinations, of modern warfare. The battles of Morgarten, Naeffels and St Jacques, will immortalize the valour of the Swiss; while the obstinate and successful resistance of the Dutch to the most powerful monarch of Europe, and to the efforts of the best disciplined troops

and most skilful generals of the age, will prove, beyond the possibility of doubt, that, under all the disadvantages of inexperience and defective discipline, the defence of a country may be securely committed to the persevering bravery of its inhabitants.

On an examination of the modern system of war, it will be perceived that, although the science has been rendered more intricate, though greater talents are requisite in the commanders, more knowledge in the engineers, and greater practical skill in the artillery, the art has been greatly simplified to the rest of the army. In ancient times, a battle might be considered as a number of single combats, in which victory depended on the expertness and bodily strength of the soldiers; qualities which could be acquired only by great and unceasing labour. The duties of a soldier now consist partly in a few movements easily acquired, but chiefly in prompt and regular obedience to command. He who has been taught to load and level his musket, to march at a regulated pace, and, without hurry or confusion, to execute a few simple changes of position, has learned every thing which he can be called upon to execute in the field. The rest is either composed of these simple elements, or intended merely for parade. The modern soldier, unlike the soldier of ancient times, has no occasion for constant exercise, that he may be inured to the weight, and instruct-

ed in the dexterous use, of his arms; all that he has to learn may be attained, without interfering materially with his usual occupations. Accordingly, a very inconsiderable part of his time is occupied in the drill. During peace, his duty consists chiefly in mounting guard, appearing twice a day on parade, and attending to the neatness of his dress, with a degree of minuteness which seems contrived merely to furnish him with some kind of occupation. But all this is quite foreign to his duty in the field, or, if at all connected with it, it is only in so far as it teaches him ready obedience even to what appear the trifling and capricious orders of his officers.

Whether the abject submission required from regular soldiers be as essential to useful discipline, as has sometimes been asserted, may admit of doubt. To teach habits of slavish subjection does not seem the readiest way of inspiring courage; nor is the confinement to an insipid routine the best mode of exciting energy of mind. The highest pride of independence is in no respect opposed to the most implicit obedience to officers who are appointed by the laws, and exercise an authority essential to the safety and success of the army; nor can it be difficult to repress by instant punishment any turbulence or mutiny, which, even to the soldiers themselves, must appear utterly subversive of discipline. That the habits acquired by regular troops, of submitting even the most indifferent actions of their lives to the

arbitrary control of others, are not requisite to the prompt and accurate discharge of their duty in the field, seems probable from what is related of the Prussian armies under Frederick the Second. The soldiers, we are told, were taken from the peasantry, and, after being sufficiently instructed in the military exercises, were allowed to return to their friends for eight or nine months every year: During this period, they were employed in their former occupations, they lived like the rest of the people, they acquired no particular habits of obedience or subjection; yet, in order, promptitude, and regularity, the Prussian troops far excelled the other armies of Europe.* It has also been said that the officers and soldiers in the armies of republican France, when not on actual duty, treated each other with a degree of freedom very subversive, in the ideas of rigid disciplinarians, of military subordination. But, in the movements of those troops, Europe felt that there was no want of regularity and prompt obedience.

It is true, that in one, and that the most essential, part of military education, a militia, when first called into actual service, must necessarily be deficient. Having never faced an enemy, they must be exposed to the influence of panics from which veteran troops are exempt. Nor can

* See Dr Moore's View of Society and Manners in France and Germany, Letter LXXII.

they be expected at once to evince coolness and steadiness in the midst of untried danger, uproar, and confusion. But, even in this respect, they are not greatly inferior to regular armies after an interval of peace. When the war for which they were levied is brought to a conclusion, many of the veterans procure their discharge; a great part of the regiments are entirely disbanded; those which are kept up are reduced to a smaller establishment; and even in them the experienced soldiers are gradually replaced by younger men. At the commencement of a new war, the establishment is suddenly augmented; and, though many of the old officers remain in the service, the privates of all new regiments, and most of those of the old, are recruits, levied chiefly from the class of sedentary workmen, unacquainted with the use of arms, destitute of military spirit, and not inured to hardships or fatigue. Should a militia at first be inferior to troops of this description (a supposition which there seems no reason to admit), in a short time it will greatly excel them. Practice in the field will speedily improve its discipline, and to this will be added an enthusiasm which can scarcely be inspired into mercenary forces. In the present state of the military art, an intelligent and active commander, particularly if there are fortifications into which he can occasionally retire, will find little difficulty in accustoming his soldiers to the presence of the enemy, without risking

any decisive action; and in repeated skirmishes and changes of position, steadiness, coolness, and promptitude, will speedily be acquired. At first, a national militia may be forced to wage a defensive and somewhat irregular warfare; but it cannot be long till it is in a condition to meet the enemy in the field, and drive him from the country.*

To those who deny the superior excellence of a national militia for the purpose of defence, it might be sufficient to point out the numbers of men, trained to at least the simpler parts of military duty, which such an institution can bring into the field. "Among the civilized nations of "modern Europe," says Dr Smith, "it is com- "puted that not more than one-hundredth part "of the inhabitants of every country can be em- "ployed as soldiers, without ruin to the country "which pays the expense of their service."†

* Dr Smith, by considering a well-trained militia as a standing army, and an ill-disciplined standing army as a militia, has endeavoured to shew that a militia is a very feeble defence against regular troops. Yet he himself had pointed out, with sufficient accuracy, the distinction between these two kinds of military force. "The practice of military exercises is the "sole or principal occupation of the soldiers of a standing "army, and the maintenance or pay which the state affords "them is the principal and ordinary fund of their subsist- "ence. The practice of military exercises is only the occa- "sional occupation of the soldiers of a militia, and they de- "rive the principal and ordinary fund of their subsistence "from some other occupation."—*Wealth of Nations, Book V. Chap. I. Part I.*

† Ibid.

During war, the establishment may for a few years be higher, but probably no country has ever maintained, as a regular military force, so large a proportion of her population. Where the public defence is confided entirely to mercenaries, the rest of the people soon lose all military ideas: unaccustomed to the use, or even to the sight, of arms, their minds become spiritless; and, confined, for the most part, to sedentary employments, their bodies are enervated: they shrink from the fatigues, and are terrified by the dangers, of war. Their sole reliance being on their army, should it be overcome, they no longer know where to look for protection. This army must, however, be reduced by continual skirmishes, or it may be almost annihilated by one decisive defeat. Should the reduction be gradual, the new recruits may indeed imbibe the spirit, and imitate the martial virtues, of their veteran companions: but when a sudden demand for numerous reinforcements takes place, the character of the army must necessarily be injured. The recruits, drawn in large numbers from a people in whom all manly energy is lost, will infect the bravest soldiers with their weakness and their fears. Those new levies have even the first elements of discipline to learn, they have to inure themselves to fatigue and privations to which they have never been accustomed, and to reconcile themselves to the presence of danger. Some have passed their lives in sedentary professions, others are worn out with debauch-

ery, few have been accustomed to violent exercise, and still fewer to contemplate the near approach of death. Having to train their bodies and minds to their new employment, they are perplexed with instructions in the very elements of discipline, which, however easy and simple in times of tranquillity, are extremely harassing to men exposed for the first time to dangers and alarms. To a nation, therefore, depending entirely on a standing army, a series of victories may be only a more splendid decay, and the loss of an important engagement, or the surrender of a considerable detachment of the forces, may be a calamity altogether irretrievable. Having no reliance on themselves, and their defenders being gone, such a people must sink into despondency. It was thus that the illustrious Frederick was weakened and almost ruined by the most brilliant victories. It was thus that Austria was forced to an ignominious peace by the battles of Marengo and Hohen Linden, that she was laid entirely at the feet of her conqueror by the defeat of Austerlitz, and that the battle of Jena secured the unqualified submission of Prussia and all the north of Germany. After such experience of the insufficiency of standing armies for the defence even of what are looked upon as warlike nations, the problem may be considered as practically solved.

It is otherwise when all the citizens are trained to arms, and ready to stand forth in defence of their country. Such a nation, in place of de-

pending on one-hundredth part of her population, can bring into the field nearly one-sixt h of her whole inhabitants. Her troops may be worn down by continual conflicts, or a whole army may be swept away by one discomfiture; but these partial losses, however rapid, will be instantly supplied, and the most tremendous carnage will be speedily repaired. Such a nation is truly fitted for defence. Her armies may be annihilated; but while every man who remains in the country may be called forth as a soldier, she can scarcely be subdued. Whatever difference there may be between the discipline of regular troops, and that of a militia, is it conceivable that it should balance a difference of numbers which may be fairly stated as about fifteen to one?

When the country is invaded, the mode in which a militia may be rendered most serviceable, is undoubtedly in completing the ranks of the regular forces, as they are thinned by war. But those who are not wanted for this purpose may be usefully employed in garrison duty, in escorting provisions, attacking the foragers of the enemy, hanging on his rear and flanks, and harassing him by continual skirmishes, in which, without risking serious discomfiture, they may waste his strength, and prepare themselves for more regular warfare.* For these purposes the whole in-

* The efficiency of this irregular warfare has been abundantly proved by the Spanish Guerillas, and by the defence of the Spanish towns.

habitants might be sufficiently trained. Accustomed to the essential movements, they would speedily acquire steadiness from the regular troops with whom they might be incorporated, and to whom in return they would communicate a portion of their enthusiastic energy; and until they were called upon to form part of the line, they might greatly assist the movements and strengthen the positions of the army, or they might retard the advance of the enemy, straiten him in his quarters, and change every repulse he sustained into a total defeat.

Had the former history of the world been insufficient to prove that an armed nation can scarcely be subdued, abundant evidence of this great truth has been furnished within a few years. France, in the middle of the last century, though supported by Austria, by the greater part of the German empire, by Russia, and at last by Spain, was successfully opposed by the genius of Frederick, aided by the resources of Britain. In later times we have seen her, by arming her people, set the world at defiance, and, without an ally, ruin the armies and exhaust the finances of the whole of Europe. Her astonishing defence was effected, in the midst of domestic treachery and a formidable civil war, by diffusing a military spirit among her citizens; and this martial spirit, carefully nourished, and ably, though most unjustly, directed by her government, has overthrown the most powerful

kingdoms, and threatens Europe with universal subjugation.* Had France depended on a standing army, when she was attacked by the most formidable coalition that has been formed in modern times, she must have been dismembered, or subdued, in a single campaign. Periods may even be pointed out in which she could scarcely be said to have an army in the field. When Dumourier took the command, the military force was weak, disorganized, and dispirited; at the time of his defection, that army which he had formed was again annihilated; and under the Directory, the troops, unprovided with necessaries, unrecruited, and neglected, were allowed to decline in numbers, in discipline, and in ardour. But what would have ruined a country depending on a regular force, was impotent against an armed nation. An appeal to the people, at every season of imminent danger, was heard and answered; and the battle of Gemap, the continued success of Pichegru, and the decisive victory of Marengo, all achieved by new levies of inexperienced soldiers, elevated France, from what was considered by her enemies as a state of hopeless weakness, to unequalled glory.

When we turn to those nations that have been subdued by the arms of France, we find their governments, with scarcely an exception, acting on a very opposite system; confiding in large and

* Written in 1810.

well-appointed armies, while they feared or neglected to call forth the energy of the people. Switzerland, however, always relied on the courage and patriotism of her militia: and although her military institutions, during a very long peace, had greatly declined, though a considerable portion of her inhabitants, irritated by an unjust exclusion from every branch of the government, was misled by the false and insidious promises of the enemy; yet her vigorous defence forms a splendid contrast to the pusillanimous submission of more powerful states. Deserted by the world, a small band of patriots opposed themselves with firmness to that torrent which was sweeping over Europe; nor did they yield, till the apathy of all the neighbouring powers, and the immense disparity of force, left no longer a hope of success.

The Spaniards have since, to the surprise of Europe, risen against their oppressors, with an energy which, though perhaps not equal to the difficulty of their enterprise, could not have been expected from their previous habits. Feared rather than trusted by their sovereigns, and totally unused to arms, they seemed entirely to have lost their martial spirit. Ignorant, superstitious, lazy, and oppressed, they appeared as incapable of generous resolutions as of vigorous exertion. Nor were the higher orders of the state in circumstances calculated to nourish patriotism, or any virtuous sentiment. Educated by bigotted priests;

dissipated even to a greater excess than the other nobles of Europe; secluded from the management of public affairs, which seemed to be systematically entrusted to men of inferior condition; in possession of immense estates, which might be forfeited by unsuccessful resistance; their situation and character promised still less energy than those of the body of the people. The capital, too, and principal fortresses, were in the hands of the invader; the few public men in whom confidence could be placed were in the power, or in the service, of the enemy; and the recent discomfiture of Austria, Russia, and Prussia, left scarcely a hope of diversion to that military force which had already prostrated Europe at the feet of France. In circumstances apparently so desperate, a great part of the nation seemed at once to start from a disgraceful apathy, to be actuated by the most generous patriotism, and to devote their lives for the independence of their country. Hitherto this spirit has not been seconded by those to whom the government was entrusted: no boon has been held out to the people, except a vague and general promise of some kind of reform at the conclusion of peace; the merit of abolishing intolerable abuses has been reserved to the enemy; and the energy of the citizens has been chilled by the fears of the wealthy or the treachery of the covetous. Whether Spain shall rise superior to these accumulated evils it were folly to predict; but one French army has

been forced to surrender, another was driven nearly to the frontiers of the kingdom, and Saragossa, which could not have been held for one day by regular troops, has exhibited a vigour and obstinacy of defence perhaps unequalled in modern history. Even if Spain should fall, she has already done more for her independence than those kingdoms which were protected by the best appointed armies; and the valour she has displayed under numerous disadvantages, is a sufficient illustration of the persevering exertions, which, in more favourable circumstances, may be expected from a militia fighting for their liberties and their country.*

If then a militia be the best, and indeed the only sure, protection of national independence, we cannot consider objections drawn from the loss of a little time and industry as of much importance. To serve all the purposes of the institution, it could not be requisite, in ordinary times, to interfere materially with the usual occupations of the inhabitants. It might probably be sufficient that every young man, on attaining his eighteenth year, should be drilled for three months under proper officers; that for the next six years, if he married, or for twelve years, if, during that period, he remained unmarried, he should be encamped and exercised for three weeks each year; and that after this age, till

* Written in 1810.

he reached his fortieth year, he should annually meet, for one week's military exercise, with the inhabitants of as many neighbouring parishes as might form a regiment of five or six hundred men.*

In a militia so constituted, every individual in the country must be obliged to serve personally. If substitution were permitted, personal service would be considered as a mark of poverty, and would consequently be declined by every one rich enough to hire a substitute, or to enter into a society, formed, on the principles of an insurance company, to protect its members. Thus, all the advantages expected from the institution would be disappointed. The same men, after the term of their service, being usually re-engaged as substitutes, the practice of arms would be almost confined to the number kept in array, without the numerical deficiency of the trained inhabitants being compensated by the superiority of their discipline. The substitutes would be as little inured to real warfare as the rest of the nation; the officers destitute of experience,

* This sketch differs from the plan which has been fully detailed by the Earl of Selkirk, only in continuing the service in the militia to the age of forty, which his lordship proposes should terminate on reaching the age of twenty-five. See his very able pamphlet, entitled, *On the Necessity of a more effectual System of National Defence, and the Means of establishing the permanent Security of the Kingdom.* His plan is detailed from page 20 to 41, and from 50 to 54.

and the soldiers actuated neither by the patriotic feelings of a militia, nor by the remembrance of former achievements and former glory. When to these considerations it is added, that the expense of raising the substitutes is in reality a tax levied without the least regard to the wealth of the contributors, and that, so far from encouraging patriotism, it is, like every other injustice, the source of public indignation and of alienation from the government, it must be obvious that a militia by substitution is merely a standing army in its most oppressive and least efficient form.

The time employed by a young man in fitting himself to defend his country, particularly when the greater part of this service was demanded of him at an age when he could seldom be invested with any important trust, could not be considered as a very serious inconvenience to himself, or as a material interference with national industry. By interrupting the sedentary habits of our workmen, the annual encampment might even be of considerable advantage in mitigating or preventing those diseases to which they are most exposed; while its effects on their morals, under proper regulations, might be rendered salutary. The men of a battalion meeting together, under the eye of their relations and friends, would vie with each other in neatness of appearance and expertness in military exercises; and by proper rewards and honours, it would not

be difficult to render arms a favourite relaxation from the ordinary employments of the people. Were this effected, much time might be saved from idleness and dissipation, while the affections of the citizens would be more strongly centred in the professed and obvious end of the institution, the honour, prosperity, and independence of their country.

The junction of martial and mechanical employments cannot be justly censured, as opposed to that division of labour on which national prosperity essentially depends. In ordinary cases, one man, if confined to a single operation, will do more work, and do it better, than several, whose attention is dissipated among various employments. But it is not so with the military art, in which all that is really useful for a private soldier may very easily be acquired, and superior manual dexterity alone will not compensate very great inferiority in numbers.

If, on the other hand, it should be feared, that military exercises would be injurious to the skill of our mechanics, a little attention to the manner in which the productiveness of labour is increased by its division, will remove such apprehensions. "The great increase of the quantity "of work," according to Dr Smith, "which, in "consequence of the division of labour, the "same number of people are capable of perform-"ing, is owing to three different circumstances: "first, to the increase of dexterity in every par-

"ticular workman: secondly, to the saving of "time which is commonly lost in passing from "one species of work to another; and, lastly, to "the invention of a great number of machines, "which facilitate and abridge labour, and ena- "ble one man to do the work of many."*

In none of these respects, could a national militia be prejudicial. The short time passed in military exercise, if as fully and actively employed as his other hours, could neither accustom the workman to idleness, nor interrupt, in a perceptible degree, those habits by which he might acquire dexterity in his particular art; as the drill would not be mixed with his ordinary employments, no time would be lost in passing from the one to the other; and mechanical inventions would not be checked, as the attention of a workman would be no more withdrawn from his usual occupations, by this healthful recreation, than it is apt to be by far less innocent amusements. If the health and strength of the people were at all improved, or if they were preserved from occasional dissipation, much more would be gained to national industry, than could possibly be lost by so slight an interference with the division of labour.

These considerations may perhaps be sufficient to support the conclusion, that a national militia is not only essential to the security of the state,

* Wealth of Nations, Book I. Chap. I.

but capable of being so arranged as to interfere very little with the ordinary occupation of the people. We should deceive ourselves, however, if we were to suppose that this institution is sufficient by itself for the protection of the public rights, or of the interests and honour of the state.

Without other establishments, a national militia would be very incomplete for the public defence. The duty of an officer is not to be learned, like that of a private, by occasional and interrupted practice. That the movements of a single regiment may be accurate, every officer commanding a company must have such a clear conception of what is intended, as may enable him instantly to give the requisite orders to his men. It is scarcely possible for him to possess promptness, particularly in situations of danger and alarm, without such practice as renders every part of his duty almost mechanical; yet the slightest mistake or even hesitation in presence of an enemy, might throw the regiment into inextricable confusion. The correctness of the officers commanding battalions is of the same importance to the rapid and orderly movement of the brigade. The officer directing the brigade has at once to attend to the general movements of the line, and to bring the troops under his command into action in the safest and most efficient manner. And when the various talents requisite in a commander in chief are considered;

the rapid and extensive combinations which he must form; the clear idea he must possess of most complicated arrangements; the coolness of judgment which he must retain, while the lives of so many men, the interests of his country, and his own glory, all hang on his decision; the benefits which he may derive from experience, and from that intuition, arising from genius assisted by experience, which discovers a thousand consequences at a single glance; when all these circumstances are fairly considered, it can scarcely be denied that military skill, on which success so entirely depends, is unattainable unless arms be considered by the officers as a distinct profession, to which they dedicate their whole time and undivided attention. Two other branches of the military art, Fortification and Artillery, require peculiar studies and great expertness, for the acquisition of which not only the officers, but also the men, ought to be constantly exercised. An establishment of officers, of engineers, and artillery is therefore requisite, even for defence: destitute of their assistance, a militia actuated by enthusiastic patriotism might ultimately be successful; but only after many severe disasters, which, under a better system, could easily have been avoided.

If a militia, unassisted by regular forces, be inadequate for defence, it must be still more defective as the means of protecting foreign possessions, or of carrying war into the territories

of the enemy. To defend the country from hostile attack is the obvious duty of every citizen, a duty which, unless the patriotism of the people has been extinguished by an oppressive government, and their military spirit by an exclusive reliance on mercenary forces, will be executed with alacrity and enthusiasm. But to march to a distance from home, to interrupt all their usual habits and occupations, to expose themselves to fatigue, privations, and danger, for interests neither personal, nor perhaps very obvious to their judgment, is a degree of devotion to the government which can scarcely be expected from the great body of the people. Accordingly in France, while the protection of the country demanded the active exertions of her sons, the armies were recruited without a murmur, and the conscription was of use, rather in giving a steady direction to the spirit of the nation, and in supplying the armies more regularly according to the exigencies of the times, than in forcing out unwilling recruits. Now that the army is employed in foreign conquests, although brilliant and almost uninterrupted success must flatter that thirst of military glory, which has always been a prominent feature in the character of the Franks, the conscription is universally reprobated as the most intolerable oppression, and its continuance, in defiance of the odium which it has excited, is the strongest proof of the despotism of the government and the army.

But it may be useful to maintain some foreign possessions, for the purpose of opening up or securing a mercantile connexion with distant countries; and it will frequently be expedient to meet preparations decidedly hostile, by a spirited and justifiable attack. To wait patiently till the enemy, after having disposed every thing for invasion, had actually entered the country, would be to sacrifice the national rights, and to carry on the war in the manner most destructive of national prosperity. Nor can a people which has been unjustly attacked rest satisfied with driving the enemy beyond the frontier. Unless he is followed into his own territories, and made to feel a part of those evils which he had prepared for others, the experience of impunity, and perhaps the spoil which he may have collected, would be constant incitements to new aggressions. There are also other justifiable causes of war besides mere self-defence. Nations are not so insulated, as to be without mutual claims to assistance and protection. They ought to be considered in the light of individuals, unconnected by any general government, but under strict obligation to protect each other from injury. When an attack is made on one, they ought to feel it as directed against all; they ought ever to be ready to interfere for the defence of each other; and, when injustice has been committed, they ought to inflict merited punishment on the aggressor. While they are prompted to mutual

protection by the best feelings of human nature, they must perceive that it is only by measures arising from such feelings, that nations, as well as individuals, consult their own interest and safety. Were the weaker states to be oppressed with impunity, a power might soon be created dangerous to all; and it would not be long before this formidable power was directed against those governments which, in the foolish confidence that they themselves were in no danger of being the victims of their own impolicy, had selfishly refused to interfere for the protection of the smaller states around them. The feverish and frequently unjust solicitude for the balance of power, which was the consequence of the ambition of Louis XIV., kept Europe in a state of great uncertainty and fluctuation, occasioned several unnecessary wars and still more unnecessary armaments, and ultimately brought discredit on that principle of general vigilance which had been so much abused. But a rational attention to the power, as well as the justice, of surrounding states, alliances amongst the weaker for their mutual defence, and a prompt interference to repel hostile aggressions, against whatever country they may be directed, are probably the surest foundations of the peace and happiness of mankind.

Not that one government should consider the prosperity of another as a justifiable cause of war, merely because that prosperity must be attended

by an increase of relative power. Such a doctrine is equally false and immoral. The only justifiable modes of balancing power arising from such sources, are by imitating an example well worthy of being followed; by husbanding the national resources for the hour of danger, by encouraging every improvement in foreign and domestic policy, and thus emulating that prosperity which has become the cause of apprehension. After all, if the increase of power, though attained by just means, should still be a source of jealousy, from the experience of the intimate connection between power and ambition, this jealousy can proceed no farther than to occasion more vigilant attention, to form more extended alliances, and to repress aggression the instant it is attempted. It cannot overstep this limit without becoming itself the source of injustice, and producing those very evils against which it affects to provide.

For all wars to be carried on at a distance, whether originating in self-defence, in the protection of colonies, or in the duty of repressing the ambition and injustice of powerful states, a militia is obviously inadequate. Invasions merely threatened will scarcely overbalance, in the estimation of the people, the inconveniences of taking the field, and marching to a distance from home; and indignation at injustice committed against foreign states will never overcome the more powerful suggestions of personal ease, per-

sonal prosperity, and personal safety. Yet, even on such occasions, the institution of a national militia is not without great and important uses. By keeping alive some degree of military ardour in the people, it facilitates the raising of regular forces; by habituating the citizens to some degree of discipline, it renders the new levies much sooner available for service; and in case of reverses, it opposes an invincible barrier to the resentment and ambition of the enemy, even in the most disastrous circumstances, protecting the national independence from every danger.

SECTION II.

Of a Standing Army.

A standing army may consist either of foreigners or of natives.

If it consist of foreigners, the officers and soldiers, having no interest in the public prosperity, may be expected to prefer their own ease and safety to the advantage of their employers, and consequently to exert themselves no further than is necessary to escape punishment, and, by semblance of war, to continue the demand for their services. Hostilities, in their hands, will become an expensive amusement never to be terminated

but by the exhaustion of the funds from which the armies are maintained: battles will be fought, as by the Condottieri of Italy, in which none will be killed unless perhaps by fatigue.*

At the same time no dependence can be placed on the adherence of such troops to the cause of their employers. Should higher terms be offered by the enemy, they will be ready on the first disgust to change their party, and attack those whom they were originally hired to defend. With them war is a trade, and, like other dealers, they may be expected, without reference to former benefits or injuries, to dispose of their arms, which are their commodity, to the highest purchaser. In such circumstances, money will really be the sinews of war, and he who can compute the revenues of the several belligerents, may easily foretel on which side victory will ultimately declare.

But such an army, however contemptible for defence, will always be formidable to the country by which it is maintained. A people, reposing the care of the national honour and inde-

* "Questa fu la battaglia fatta tra gl' Italiani, e i Franzesi, "in sul fiume del Taro, memorabile perchè fu la prima, che, "da lunghissimo tempo in qua, si combattisse con uccisione, "e con sangue in Italia, perche inanzi a questa, morivano "pochissimi uomini in un fatto d'arme."

Guicciardini, Lib. II.

"Machiavel rapporte, que dans une battaille de ces temps-"là, il n'y eut de mort qu'un cavalier ètouffè dans la presse."

Voltaire, Essai sur l'Hist. Gen. Chap. LXXXVI.

pendence on foreigners, must soon lose their military spirit, and become an easy prey to those on whom they have so pusillanimously devolved their duties. In ordinary cases, foreign mercenaries will support the despotism of the prince by whom they are paid; occasionally they may be bribed to dethrone the lawful sovereign, in favour of a usurper by whom they are promised higher pay or greater licentiousness; and, when they find themselves sufficiently powerful, they may even place their own general on the throne, and, like the Mamelukes in Egypt, administer, for their own interests, that system of oppression and pillage which not unfrequently has been dignified with the name of a regular government.

When a standing army is levied from the inhabitants of the country, the dangers by which it is attended are considerably less; but, even then, it is not easy to regulate this species of military force, so as to remove well-grounded apprehensions for the morals and liberties of the people.

Standing armies, as they have hitherto been recruited, are composed chiefly of profligates, who are either unwilling to work, or find it difficult, from the loss of character, to get into regular employment. The morals of such men, it is true, cannot be injured in the army: on the contrary, as the strictness of military discipline will deter from such excesses as unfit a soldier for his duty, they may in some respects be improved.

But in the army there are also to be found boys unable to judge of their own interests, thoughtless young men seduced by the showy appearance of the troops, or inveigled during an accidental, and perhaps very unusual, course of dissipation, and industrious workmen compelled, during some stagnation of manufactures, to seek this last refuge from the pressure of want. The change which soon takes place in their appearance is not greater than what may be expected in their character and habits. In actual service, they are, indeed, exposed to greater fatigue and more unceasing exertions than in their former professions; but in time of peace, or while in quarters during war, their employment is mere idleness, to stand centinel on a particular post, to appear twice a day at parade, and occasionally to attend drill. During the rest of the day, they have nothing to do but to clean their arms and deck out their persons, unless when they happen to be employed in procuring new recruits, by leading the unwary into scenes of debauchery. Such a life must strengthen that propensity to idleness, which to many was the chief recommendation of a military life, and produce it in those who were formerly industrious. Neither is it likely, that this idleness, where so many temptations are accumulated, should be unattended by vice. The mind of man cannot remain listless and indifferent, but, if otherwise

unoccupied, will fly to dissipation as a refuge from languor. To such excesses some will be enticed by the allurements, others urged on by the sarcasms, of their companions. From being often on duty together, and having a great deal of unoccupied time, soldiers are naturally led into intimacy with those of their own company, and into some acquaintance with a great proportion of the regiment; and, where so many are already corrupted, and all are idle, a very general profligacy must necessarily prevail. Accordingly, the return of a soldier to sobriety and industry is a rare occurrence; and when a regiment is reduced, the greater part of the privates, unfitted for assiduous application to their former professions, and no longer maintained in idleness by the state, become a burden on their more industrious relations, or have recourse to crimes by which the peace of society is destroyed, and they themselves exposed to the vengeance of the law.

The same vicious habits are apt to spread from the army, and infect the rest of the inhabitants. The soldiers, showy in their dress, smart in their appearance, and amusing in their conversation, are admired and imitated by the young. Their acquaintance is courted to hear the recital of their adventures, or to partake in their amusements, their idleness is contrasted with the hard labour of the workman, their dissipation with his frugal and regular habits. Some are thus induced to enlist, while others, deterred by the occasional

hardships of a military life, or restrained by their friends, imitate the vices of the soldiers, and become useless or noxious members of society. The same showy appearance of soldiers, the amusing variety of their conversation, and their superior knowledge of the world, captivate the women who are so unfortunate as to attract their attentions; and at every change of quarters, a number of these deluded wretches are abandoned to infamy and vice. Every man or woman who associates with soldiers is accordingly regarded as in the highway to ruin, the morals of every town in which troops are usually stationed are corrupted, and a standing army may not unjustly be considered as an institution for peopling our brothels and our jails.

The history of all nations, by proving that the decay or downfal of liberty has almost invariably followed the establishment of a standing army, might surely satisfy us that the dangers to free government, from such an institution, are at least as formidable as those to public morals. But it has been maintained, that "where the sovereign is himself the general, and the principal "nobility and gentry of the country the chief "officers of the army; where the military force is "placed under the command of those who have "the greatest interest in the support of civil au-"thority, because they have themselves the great-"est share of that authority, a standing army "can never be dangerous to liberty: on the

"contrary, it may in some cases be favourable "to liberty. The security which it gives to the "sovereign renders unnecessary that trouble- "some jealousy, which, in some modern repub- "lics, seems to watch over the minutest actions, "and to be at all times ready to disturb the peace "of every citizen."* This opinion deserves consideration, less perhaps on its own account, than on that of the very high authority by which it is supported.

The sovereign, except in rude times, or when there is something singular in the situation of the country or in the talents of the reigning prince, is only nominally general; and little security, it would seem, can arise, either to the public or himself, from his holding an office, the duties of which he does not perform in person. The Roman emperors appropriated to themselves the triumphs of all their generals; but this circumstance did not prevent them from being dethroned by their armies. In modern times, however, the power of generals is more limited, and their commands of shorter duration. The prince, retaining in his own hands the power of promotion, may model the army in such a manner as to obviate any danger arising from the ambition of those commanders, whom he has appointed, and may at pleasure remove. This, it must be acknowledged, adds greatly to his own security,

* Wealth of Nations, Book V. Chap. I. Part I.

and somewhat to that of the people: for although, if a tyranny be established, it signifies little by whom it may be exercised; yet a change of masters is always attended with confusion, and frequently with exiles, massacres, and proscriptions. This, then, is some security against rebellion and usurpation, but none in favour of liberty; it is only placing power, whether just or unjust, on more stable foundations.

The security derived from the private rank and wealth of the officers is more important, though it seems to be greatly over-rated by Dr Smith. No sovereign, without the connivance or assistance of the officers, can employ his army directly against the people; and, in his designs against the liberties of his country, it will certainly be more difficult for him to procure the support of men of rank and property, than that of mere soldiers of fortune. But if he has the prudence to avoid palpable and revolting oppression, and the cunning to make compensation to his army for the general overthrow of liberty, he may be confident of the support of his troops, and the price of this support, of whatever nature it may be, will ultimately be paid by the people. Such of the officers as are too opulent to be bribed with money, will be gained by the prospect of military rank, or perhaps by the personal notice of the sovereign; and those who might withstand such allurements, may be conciliated by

new privileges or honours conferred on the orders of which they are, or by succession will become, members. However odious the despotism of the sovereign may be to the nobles, it will be rendered palatable by communicating to them a similar despotism over the people; and thus the interests of the aristocracy being identified with those of the prince, a chain of abuses will be forged to bind the army to the throne. The French army before the revolution was exactly in such circumstances. The officers were in general men of rank and property, interested in the welfare of their country. Yet this army was universally considered as the great engine of the despotism both of the king and of the nobles: it was the sure bulwark of every abuse; to it, as to the foundation of his power, every sovereign trusted for repressing all attempts to regain the lost liberties of the nation; while every patriot viewed it as an insurmountable obstacle to reformation in the state. At last indeed it recoiled with irresistible force against the hand by which its motions had so long been directed. But the honour of this patriotic effort is altogether due to the soldiers; a great majority of those officers, on whose sentiments we are desired to rely, having shewn themselves ready to obey every mandate of the court, to strangle the reform of abuses in its birth, to dissolve the national representation, and to tread in the dust the last hopes of the liberty of their country.

We are told that the power secured to the sovereign by the establishment of a standing army, is in reality favourable to freedom, as it removes all cause of jealousy on the part of government. "That degree of liberty," says Dr "Smith,* "which approaches to licentious- "ness, can be tolerated only in countries where "the sovereign is secured by a well-regulated "standing army. It is in such countries only "that the public safety does not require that "the sovereign should be trusted with any dis- "cretionary power, for suppressing even the im- "pertinent wantonness of this licentious liber- "ty." This indeed is an admirable consolation, which may be drawn from every degree of despotism in the prince! It is an argument which would equally prove that a shackled press, or the prohibition of political discussion, the court of the Star Chamber, or that of the Inquisition, were the best bulwarks of freedom. That liberty must be precious indeed, which is founded on the contempt of popular opinion and the absolute authority of the sovereign. It may be true, that, where the voice of the people is altogether impotent, and the power of the sovereign altogether uncontrouled, one source of injustice, the fear of insurrection, may be dried up; but how many will be opened in the impunity of crimes, whether committed by the prince, by his favour-

* Wealth of Nations, Book V. Chap. I. Part I.

ites, by his ministers, or by his army? He, who values liberty as he ought, will wish to hold it by another tenure; he will desire to secure it on the intelligence, patriotism, and power of the people; on the privileges guaranteed by a wise and free constitution; on the impotency, rather than the indulgence, of the sovereign.

But even this degrading consolation is denied by experience. Under the old governments of France, Spain, and Naples, and the still existing governments of Prussia, Austria, Russia, and Turkey, the public defence has been entrusted to large standing armies composed chiefly of natives, and, in some of these countries, officered exclusively by the noblesse. Is it to such countries, where no book could be imported or published without a licence, where every conversation was reported to the police, where every domestic might be a spy, and where every citizen was liable to indefinite imprisonment without knowing his accuser or his crime, that we are to look for "that degree of liberty which approaches to li-"centiousness?" No: it is in England, where standing armies have hitherto been watched with a laudable jealousy; in Holland, where they were comparatively weak; in Switzerland, where they were altogether unknown; that the blessings of freedom of speech, writing, and action, have been enjoyed by the people. The Italian governments, to which Dr Smith seems to allude, were in reality oligarchies, threatened on the one hand

by the insulted rights of the citizens, and on the other by the ambition of particular magistrates or powerful families, and exposed, by the narrowness of their territories, to sudden destruction from a well-concerted conspiracy, or even a trifling commotion. It was in these circumstances that their anxious and tyrannical jealousy originated; not in the want of a standing army, which they almost all kept in pay, nor in the establishment of a militia, which, unless in the small but happy states of Lucca and San Marino, had fallen into disuse.

Indeed, of all securities for public liberty, a national militia is by far the most stable, and, where unavoidable circumstances require the establishment of a large standing army, it is perhaps the only effectual restraint on the ambition of the prince. Not that the army and the militia will probably be at any time arrayed against each other, the one to support, and the other to oppose, despotical government; but that the sovereign, knowing the power of the people to be sufficient to overwhelm him and his partisans, will learn to curb his ambition, to pay due deference to public opinion, and to refrain from any open attack, by means of his army, on the national rights. If arms are put into the hands of the people, we may always conclude, whatever be the theoretical system of government, that a real despotism cannot exist. Forms of government are by no means indifferent; they are always distinguished by their respective

powers of inciting the people to activity, and diffusing a patriotic spirit through the nation; but if a general militia be established, it is probable that individual freedom, justice in the administration of the laws, and a certain deference to public opinion, may be attained, even under what may appear an absolute monarchy. The governors, by whatever name designated, and however uncontrouled their legal authority, must be sensible that they hold their power only by the sufferance of the nation, and that the consequences of its being grossly abused will be its immediate resumption and their own disgrace. Some of the Swiss cantons were pure democracies; in several, the government was monopolized by the principal town; and in others, it was exclusively in particular families: but, notwithstanding these varieties, all the cantons might be considered as essentially free; for they were all protected solely by militias, and the voice of the people, when distinctly pronounced, could not be despised.

A militia may thus be a sufficient defence against any direct attempt to enslave a nation by a military force, but it can afford no protection to a representative government, against that influence which may subject the national councils, as completely, if not in so open and degrading a manner, to the will of the prince. That the army may have no interests separate from those of the state, that they may carry on no factious

conspiracies, and cause no revolutions in the government, it has been thought requisite to vest the power of promotion entirely in the sovereign. But this is to render every officer of the army dependent on the crown, and, as these officers are frequently men of high rank and connexions, to establish, by their means, a corrupt influence over the representatives of the people. Were we to correct this error by excluding all officers from the national councils, we might drive men of consideration from the army, and deprive the legislature of much information essential to the public service. Nor would such a law be effectual in remedying the evil. The number of officers elected to seats in the legislature is never very great, and even of them a considerable portion must at all times be absent on their professional duties. It is not their direct power as representatives that is dangerous, but their influence over their numerous friends and relations. To exclude them, while their fathers and brothers were permitted to sit in the national councils, would scarcely be any check on that influence which arises from army promotions; and to set aside all the near relations of officers would be to narrow the choice of electors, to degrade the profession of a soldier, or to disfranchise almost every man of rank and consequence in the state.

The worst and most dangerous influence, however, is not that which is exercised over the representatives, many of their constituents being them-

selves in the army, and many more having near relations whose promotion they are anxious to accelerate. Even the permission to purchase more quickly than others of equal standing in the army, is a very high object of ambition; and promotion without purchase is in reality the receiving of a sum of money equal to the regulated price, in such a manner as to be considered, neither by the voter nor others, as a dishonourable bribe. Favours of this kind are to be procured only by supporting the ministerial candidate; and he who casts his eyes over the army list, will be at no loss to understand the extensive influence that every minister, during a contested election, must derive from the power of military promotion. This influence he may exert so as to be almost decisive of the contest, without degrading his supporters even in their own estimation, without openly retarding the promotion of his opponents, and indeed without taking any step that will appear so unusual as to attract the public notice.

These evils have hitherto appeared inseparable from a standing army, and will fully justify that suspicion and dislike with which the institution has been viewed by every patriot. In the present state of Europe, however, no country, trusting entirely to a militia, could long preserve her relative importance. When one nation employs a regular army, it is no longer in the power of others to avoid forming similar establishments. All that remains is, to enquire by what means

those dangers both to public morals and public freedom, which cannot be entirely obviated, may, without hazarding the safety of the state, be diminished.

In considering the several disadvantages of standing armies, it has appeared that they are injurious to morals, chiefly from the character and idleness of the soldiers, and that they are dangerous to liberty, chiefly from the manner in which the officers are appointed and promoted. If effectual remedies can be discovered for those evils, they unquestionably ought to be adopted, although they might, in some respects, be detrimental to the military character of the army. Too high a price may be paid for what, in a military point of view, is the very best establishment; for to risk the morals and liberties of a nation in order to procure the most perfect, though not the only effectual, means of defence, seems to be an abandonment of all that is worth defending. It is possible, however, that these two great objects, national protection and national freedom, may not be so inconsistent, as the present military establishments of Europe would lead us to conclude; that the one may be fully attained, without endangering the other.

I. If a national militia were established, there could be no occasion for keeping up a large military force during peace. Garrisons, no doubt, must be maintained in foreign dependencies to prevent surprise, and nations, exposed from their

situation to sudden attacks, must keep in readiness a body of troops by which such attacks may be instantly repelled. But for these purposes no very numerous armies can be requisite. A formidable aggression can scarcely be made without preparations and movements, from which it may for some time be foreseen ; and if there were an establishment of officers, artillery, and engineers, the regiments of the line might soon be completed by voluntary enlistment from a people accustomed to the use of arms, and deeply interested in the public prosperity. These new levies could not be equal to veteran troops ; but they would be little inferior to regiments recruited during peace from the idle and dissolute, who, after their enlistment, had passed some years in profligacy, but none in the field, and much superior to those new regiments, which, at the commencement of every war, are raised from sedentary tradesmen, equally unused to arms and fatigue. Every war at its commencement, and many during their progress, interrupt some of the ordinary occupations of the people, and, throwing numbers of workmen out of employment, force them to enter into new professions. To a young man thus obliged to change his objects and habits, the army, in the duties of which he was partially instructed, would be recommended by every motive of ambition and public spirit. Even at present, there is seldom much difficulty in raising recruits from a population altogether unaccus-

tomed to the use of arms, and we cannot doubt that the facilities arising from the diffusion of military ardour would be of incalculable importance.

Were the country in such circumstances, the privates of a regiment might be reduced, during peace, to the small number requisite for the regular practice of the officers in military evolutions, and for the speedy instruction of the recruits, by whom, immediately on a declaration of war, they might expect to be joined. Those soldiers ought not to be indulged in that idleness which corrupts their own morals, and gives them an opportunity of corrupting those of others. Should their regimental duties be insufficient occupation, they might be of essential service in instructing the militia, and, in doing so, they could not fail to improve their own discipline, to extend their knowledge of military tactics, and to strengthen their bodies by regular exercise in the field.

The great security for morals, however, must be found in the improved condition of the soldiers themselves, and in their being originally men of more virtuous habits, and drawn from more respectable classes of the inhabitants. While a soldier, by enlisting, resigns all control over his own actions for the remainder of his life, while he subjects himself to severe and disgraceful punishments for trifling neglects or transgressions, and engages in a profession from which, however disagreeable to him, there is no retreat, the army

must be chiefly recruited from the idle, thoughtless, and dissolute, who lose all consideration of futurity in present debauchery, or embrace what ought to be an honourable profession, as a means of escaping the punishment of their crimes. Some industrious tradesmen may be forced to enlist by want of employment, more may be seduced during a temporary course of dissipation; but there is scarcely an instance of a well-principled young man in the lower ranks of life deliberately choosing the army as a profession, and none of his making this choice with the approbation of his friends. A large proportion of the soldiers may therefore be considered as the refuse of other trades; and even the few virtuous men who enter the army, sensible that by this step they have lost character among their acquaintances, and seduced or ridiculed by their new associates, are apt to become much less correct in their future behaviour. There seems but one way to redeem the character of the profession, and that is by removing its peculiar disadvantages; by correcting what may be called its criminal code, restricting the enlistment to a determinate number of years, and putting an end to the artifices and debauchery which are systematically employed to entrap the unwary.

Enough has already been said of the expediency of proportioning punishments to crimes.*

* See Book II. Chap. II. Sec. I.

Were farther illustrations wanted, they might be furnished abundantly by an examination of the army of Britain. Regiments, in which, from the cruelty or caprice of the commanding officer, punishments are frequent and severe, are usually remarkable for their deficiency in the important parts of military discipline, and for the disorderly behaviour of the men; while those, in which gentler punishments are steadily inflicted, become regular in their conduct and distinguished in the field. So true it is, that in all situations mankind must be restrained from crimes, by a system of coercion, not sanguinary, but consistent with justice, and therefore steadily applied. That the character of the army may be improved, the system of military punishment must exchange its indiscriminate cruelty for just and necessary coercion; the respectable classes of the people must not be driven from the profession by tyranny to which they will not submit; and a soldier who has committed a trifling fault must not be subjected to infamy and torture.

But even if this improvement were effected, it would not, while the term of service is for life, remove that general prejudice against the profession which prevents all sober and considerate men from enlisting. Nothing can be more oppressive than to take advantage of youth, inexperience, dissipation, or misfortune, in order to impose an obligation which can never afterwards be annulled. Even if the person by whom it was

contracted had previously weighed deliberately all the advantages and disadvantages of a military life, it would be hard to preclude every future alteration of his views, and to confine him to a profession which, after more experience, or in consequence of a change in his own character, might become less agreeable to his inclinations. But to allow this permanent engagement to be contracted by a boy, whom the laws would not permit to manage his own affairs, to watch an hour of thoughtlessness or of despair, perhaps to seize the moment of generous patriotism, in order to rivet fetters from which there is no hope of escape, is an instance of tyranny scarcely to be equalled in any other institution of civilized society.

Were enlistment to be for a limited time, it is probable that the army might, in a great degree, be formed of young men, who, having acquired some military ardour in the course of training for the militia, would be but feebly opposed by their friends, to whom it could appear at worst only a temporary imprudence. If by such enlistments, the majority of the soldiers should be brought to consist of men of good principles and virtuous habits, there seems no reason why vice might not be discountenanced in a camp as much as in a workshop. The worthless and dissolute, in place of being emboldened, as at present, by their numbers, would, as in other professions, endeavour to conceal those irregularities which

they did not abandon, and a soldier might leave the army, when his term of service was expired, no more corrupted in his morals than if he had spent the same period in any labour which required the assemblage of a number of men. There does not appear to be any thing in the life of a soldier, except that idleness which a proper discipline might correct, to render the profession of arms a school of vice; and accordingly, the privates of most of the Highland fencible regiments, which were raised by noblemen from their tenants and labourers, having associated chiefly with each other, returned home, on the reduction of their regiments, uncontaminated by what are usually considered as military vices.

While this temporary service in the line would be greatly promoted by the diffusion of a military spirit among the people, it would in return very much improve the state of the national militia. Those to whom the life of a soldier was agreeable would remain in the army, and form a body of troops in every respect superior to men who continued to serve merely from compulsion. The places of such as retired would be supplied by young men ardent in their hopes of happiness and advancement. Nor would the services of such as had spent some years in military duties be afterwards lost to the country: they would return among the citizens, to be instructors of the militia, and a sure defence in the hour of danger. In a course of time, their numbers

would be considerable, their steadiness would improve the discipline of the militia, and at the commencement of war a proportion of these veterans would be induced, by their ardour in the cause, by their recollection of former exploits, and by the interruption of their ordinary occupations, again to offer their services to the state. In France it is said to have been more common, than in the other countries of Europe, for young men, before settling in a profession, to spend a few years in the army; and probably this circumstance contributed, in no small degree, to the facility with which troops were levied and disciplined, at the beginning of the revolution.

If, then, enlistment for a limited period, while it removes the greatest hardship in the life of a soldier, promises to fill the ranks of the standing army with more respectable men, and thus to correct that immorality which hitherto has attended the institution; and if, at the same time, there is reason to believe that it may facilitate the levy of troops, and improve the discipline of the national militia; the experiment surely deserves a much more full and impartial trial, than it has yet had in the military institutions of modern Europe.

II. The degree of danger to public liberty from the establishment of a standing army, is, in a great measure, dependent on the system of promotion. That which prevails in the British service is of two kinds; by purchase; or at the dis-

cretion of the sovereign. In both, some attention is paid to seniority, but chiefly in the first. When a commission is for sale, it is usually obtained by the oldest officer in the regiment who is willing to purchase; but when, in consequence of death or resignation, the promotion is gratuitous, an officer is frequently brought from another regiment, and in this way a young man may be rapidly advanced before those who are of much longer standing in the army.

The liberty of purchasing commissions holds out quick advancement as an inducement to men of property to enter the service, and thus the officers, in place of being mere soldiers of fortune, depending even for their subsistence on the will of the sovereign, become, in a great proportion, the nobility and gentry of the country, who have too much interest in the public prosperity to sacrifice it to the aggrandisement of the crown. The security which this affords to freedom has probably been rated too high, but it would be equally erroneous to consider it as unimportant. It prevents the army from being turned into an engine of general oppression on the mere caprice of a prince or a minister, and by rendering many preparations necessary, and requiring much attention to conciliate the higher orders of the state, it gives time for the passions of the prince to subside, for the public mind to be alarmed, and for a powerful opposition to be formed. Were all officers entirely dependent on the crown,

the liberties of the country might be crushed in a moment; but when many of them are men of property, the advances of despotism must be less rapid, and every encroachment on the rights of the people must be purchased by some concession to the higher orders, or by distinctions conferred upon the principal commanders.

This, however, is the only advantage attending the system of promotion by purchase: in a military point of view, all its consequences are detrimental. The richest members of a profession are seldom those who show most diligence in learning its details, or most regularity in practising its duties. Educated amidst every indulgence, they may indeed be as brave as poorer men; but they are less accustomed to control their desires, less habituated to minute attentions and assiduous application, less dependent on their own exertions for their advancement in life. In exposing themselves to danger, their sense of honour may render them equal, or superior, to those of lower rank, but all their habits unfit them for privations, to which in the field they ought to submit, and for thatunceasing attention to the soldiers under their command, and that intimate knowledge of minute details, which are no less indispensable than personal courage. At the same time, by retarding the promotion of those officers who expect advancement only from seniority or merit, the right of purchase renders the army a less eligible pro-

fession to those who would be forced to study it in all its parts, and to seek distinction by their knowledge or exploits. By rapid advancement the rich come to occupy all the higher stations in the service, and to be entrusted with commands to which their education, experience, and talents are unequal.

To a rise by seniority, unless some departure be allowed from the ordinary routine, there are also many objections. All stimulus to exertion is taken away, every reward for excellence is withheld. Those who can reap no advantage from diligence or exertion may be expected to study their own ease, and, in as far as the rules of the service and the superintendance of their commanders will permit, to neglect the duties of their profession. Every thing will be done by compulsion, nothing from ambition. While general ignorance and languor will thus pervade the inferior officers, the higher commissions will be held indiscriminately by men with and without merit, but all arrived at an age hostile to enterprise, and most of them unfit to support either mental or bodily fatigue. An army so officered will proceed by routine; while superior in the field, it will advance with caution, and by a regular process; while equal to the enemy it may act with steadiness, but will never astonish him by enterprise, or overpower him by celerity; and the moment it is inferior, it will commence a retreat, without attempting, by activity or stra-

tagem, to balance the disadvantage of its numbers. In the campaigns of such an army, there may be little to blame, but there will be still less to admire.

The manner in which an opening is left for merit, in the English service, is, however, extremely liable to abuse. It is evidently impossible that the sovereign, even if he were desirous of doing justice to military talents, should be able of himself to select proper objects of promotion; and it is, at least, very unlikely that any minister, to whom this patronage may be committed, will refuse to render it the instrument of increasing his own influence, or of establishing that of the political party under whose banners he is enlisted. His majesty's name may be used, but the appointments will depend upon the ministry, and will be converted by them into the means of corruption. In so far as promotion may be given to the representatives of the people, or their near relations, the effect on the army will be similar to that arising from the sale of commissions. Men of rank and consideration in the country, even though destitute of military talents, will be advanced to the highest commands. But the evil will be of still more extensive prevalence. Commissions will be distributed also among the electors as the price of their votes; the power of the crown will thus be increased, the independence of parliament destroyed, and the public spirit of the nation undermined; while

the respectability of the army must be injured, and many meritorious officers, who happen neither to be rich, nor connected with the infamous traffic of elections, will be forced to submit to the command of those whom they justly despise, or be driven by repeated insults from the service.

In establishing a system of military promotion, there seem four great objects, none of which can be disregarded without public danger; that a proportion of the officers should be interested in the welfare of the state; that the army should form no separate faction which might become formidable to the government; that it should not be converted into an engine of corrupt influence over the representatives or their constituents; and that, while promotion from length of service was not denied to ordinary talents, a proper field should be opened to ambition, and just rewards conferred on distinguished merit. By no single system, perhaps, can all these objects be attained; but neither does there seem any reason why several systems should not be conjoined.

That the officers may in general be men of respectability, it might be proper to dispose of three-fourths of the ensigncies at a regulated price, for the behoof of a fund to provide for the widows and families of officers who die in the service; the selection, when there are more applications than one, being left to the field-officers of the regiment, either in rotation, or ac-

cording to a majority of votes. The sons of officers, on attaining their sixteenth year, should be entitled to the remaining ensigncies, and in case there should be no applications from young men of this description, it might be left to the colonel, to promote a deserving serjeant from any regiment in the service,* or to dispose of the commission for the benefit of the fund.

In rising from the rank of ensign to that of field-officer, one-third of the commissions might be saleable to the oldest officers in the regiment, at a regulated price, applicable to the fund; one-third ought to go by seniority, without purchase; and the remaining third might be advantageously disposed of by a kind of election; the captains selecting an ensign for promotion to a lieutenancy, and a lieutenant, but subject to the approval of the field-officers, for promotion to a company.

In like manner, every third majority and lieutenant-colonelcy might be sold in the regiment, the next should be given according to seniority, and to the remaining third, the appointment might be in the superior officers; that is, to the majority in the field-officers, and to the lieutenant-colonelcy in the colonel, subject to the approbation of the general commanding the district.

* When a serjeant receives a commission, it is desirable, in order to break his former connexions, and relieve him from too great a sense of inferiority to the other officers, that he should be removed to another regiment.

Above the rank of lieutenant-colonel, all purchases and elections having ceased, the promotion, as at present, should be by seniority; but, that there still may be an object of ambition, it might be expedient to permit the sovereign to depart from the established rule, upon stating, in public orders, the services by which each deviation was justified.

By this, or some similar system, the influence of the crown over the representative body, and the general corruption which pervades every rank of society, in so far as they arise from the army promotions, might be corrected; while all danger to liberty from the military force would be as effectually obviated as at present. The best check, however, on military despotism is a national militia, without which no country can be safe, and with which no nation can be enslaved.

Little danger could be apprehended of an army so constituted forming factious conspiracies against the government. It is inconceivable that so great a number of officers, unconnected with each other, should follow out any such system in their numerous elections, as could combine the army into one body acting together against the state. This would be still farther prevented by the opening left for the quick promotion of men of fortune, who, though they might not be the best officers, would form the best security against the ambition of a military leader: and if danger still remained, it would be sufficiently obviated

by vesting in the sovereign the uncontrouled appointment to every command, though not to every rank, above that of lieutenant-colonel.

With regard to the army itself, it is probable that the effects of some system of this kind would be highly beneficial. By an election committed to superior officers, discipline would be easily enforced: the obedience of inferiors would be insured, not merely by the fear of punishment, but also by the hope of reward. Promotion, slow indeed, but certain, would be insured to those, who, without uncommon abilities, dedicated their lives to the service, and a more brilliant career would be opened to such as were distinguished by superior diligence and attainments, by powerful talents or splendid achievements. While every officer was striving to excel his competitors, the army would be indefatigable, ardent, and intelligent in the field; and even a season of peace would not bring that relaxation of the military spirit, that idleness, and disregard of military instruction, which are the necessary consequences of a system of promotion unconnected with individual exertion, and entirely dependent on wealth or ministerial favour. Assured of advancement proportioned to merit, every officer, from the subaltern to the colonel, would be anxious to attract the observation of his superiors by diligent attention to his duties, or by some improvement in military tactics; the frivolity of the profession would disappear, and be replaced

by ardent emulation. An army so constituted could scarcely fail to be well commanded, and, every order being executed with intelligence and precision, the general might look forward with confidence to the success of the most extensive combinations.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Superintendance and Direction of Capital and Industry.

SECTION I.

Of the Nature and Accumulation of Capital.

The sole end of all the labours of man is to supply his wants, whether real or imaginary; to procure such necessaries as are requisite for his subsistence, such comforts as increase his enjoyments, or such luxuries as gratify his love of distinction, or his capricious fancies and desires. But whatever is conducive to these ends, is, with a few exceptions, of a perishable nature; being consumed, in some cases instantaneously, in others more gradually, while it ministers to his gratifications. The bottle of wine which he has swallowed, the suit of clothes which he has worn, having afforded that degree of pleasure or convenience which they were fitted to produce, cease to exist, and can no longer be reckoned

among his means of enjoyment. Should he, however, refrain from making use of them, should he keep his wine in his cellar, and his clothes in his chest, although he could derive from them no immediate pleasure, they would still remain means of enjoyment at his command: in other words, they would constitute part of his wealth.

Were the individual, who had thus saved part of his income, to be idle during the following year, or were he to become so extravagant as to consume not only the produce of his present industry, but also what he had formerly laid up; in the one case, he would furnish all his immediate enjoyments, in the other, a part of them, at the expense of his stores; and having done so, he would possess no more wealth at the end of the second year than at the commencement of the first. But were he to continue his usual industry, and to preserve part of its produce in each year, the quantity of his means of enjoyment would be annually augmented by the whole of that produce of his labour, which, in place of consuming, he had stored up for future use. This is the simplest view of the accumulation of wealth. It is here considered merely as the savings from the income of former years, as that part of the possessions of an individual which has been reserved for future enjoyment and consumption. It is altogether the fruits of former economy, or, as it is sometimes called, of former privation.

But by mere hoarding, wealth would be very slowly increased, and those objects in which it was fixed would be exposed to various accidents, and wasted by gradual decay. To prevent such losses, each proprietor is induced to employ his surplus, not in accumulating perishable commodities, but in maintaining servants, whose labour will return to him, at the end of the year, a quantity of the means of enjoyment at least equal to what had been expended on their subsistence. He no longer lays up his savings, but delivers them to others by whom they are consumed, and from whom he afterwards receives at least an equal quantity of the same commodities, or of others in his estimation equally valuable. Wealth so employed is denominated Capital or Stock. Like the expenditure of its proprietor, it is annually consumed; but, unlike that expenditure, it is from time to time returned to him in the produce of the labour of his servants, and therefore still constitutes part of his wealth.

By employing a number of servants, he, who has acquired a capital, may cultivate more ground, and expect to reap a more abundant harvest. Even if the additional produce should not exceed the maintenance of those servants, he can lose nothing by advancing their subsistence from his stores; but as the produce of his own labour has exceeded his own expenditure, he may justly expect that of his servants, who ought to work as much and to live as sparingly, to exceed the va-

lue of the clothes and provisions which they consume. At each harvest, therefore, a greater quantity of grain, wool, or wine, will be brought into his stores, than had been taken from them during the course of the year. This surplus is exactly similar to that which formerly arose from his own industry and economy. It is the excess of the produce of his servants' labour over their expenditure; it is what, on the supposition that each man is entitled to consume the whole fruits of his industry, might be called the result of their parsimony or privations. It is not, however, stored up for their use, but delivered to their master in return for the advancement of their maintenance. It is a new income, of which he becomes possessed in consequence of his capital, or that reserved fund of enjoyments, which, that it might afterwards return to him with a profit, he had expended on others. Like his other wealth, he may either consume the profit in his own gratification, or he may lay it up as a further fund for future reproduction. In the one case, he becomes no richer at the end of the year, though, by the consumption of his profits, he may have lived better; in the other case, he accumulates new capital, by means of which he may annually increase the number of his servants, the extent of his farm, and, consequently, the amount of his returns.

Experience will soon prove to the master, that, by keeping all his servants in his family, and pro-

viding them with food and clothes according to their several wants, he subjects himself to unnecessary trouble and expense. He will, therefore, be inclined to appoint stated times at which a certain quantity of the articles requisite for their subsistence will be delivered to each ; or he will give to each a certain sum of money, in exchange for which the necessaries of life may be procured. To his servants such an arrangement secures some degree of independence, as it leaves them at liberty to expend their wages according to their own inclinations. It also acts as a strong incitement to more rigid economy ; for whatever they can save from their allowance now belongs to themselves, forming a fund reserved for their own future enjoyments, or a capital to be employed, for their own behoof, in future reproduction.

When a farm servant has thus acquired a little capital of his own, he has no longer occasion to have his subsistence advanced to him by others, and therefore he is not obliged, on this account, to relinquish any part of the produce of his labour ; but as the land, cattle, and implements of agriculture are the property of his master, he must still yield a great part of the crop, as a compensation for their use. In this state, he is what was called, in France, a Metayer.

By degrees, as his savings accumulate, he purchases and maintains the cattle requisite for his farm, provides his own instruments of agricul-

ture, and advances the means of subsistence to such servants as he finds necessary to aid him in his labours. He is now independent of the landholder for every thing but the use of the land. In a country entirely appropriated, there is no land on which, without permission, he can employ his labour and that of his servants and cattle; nor can he expect permission to cultivate a field belonging to another, without dividing the annual produce with its proprietor. The proportion of this produce which he reserves for himself must at least be sufficient to maintain the labourers and cattle, as well as to keep in good order the farming utensils; otherwise, he would impoverish himself by the employment of his capital. In general, it must be more than this, that he may be induced, by the expectation of profit, to expend those riches which he had accumulated; and, if agriculture be the only employment of stock, the amount of this profit will be regulated by the demand that there is for land compared with the quantity of land in a state fit for culture. The portion of the crop, which the proprietor will be inclined to take for the use of the land, rather than cultivate it himself, will be regulated by the same competition, allowance being made for the nature of the soil, the improvements it has undergone, the distance of the market, and other circumstances which may vary the proportion of the annual value of the crop to the annual outlay on the farm. The whole profit,

however, in whatever way it may be divided between the farmer and the proprietor, is merely the surplus produce of agricultural labour above the necessary annual expenditure.

In process of time, it is found more convenient for the landholder to receive a fixed compensation for the use of his land, than to be dependent on the seasons, and the industry of his tenant; and the same arrangement will be preferred by the farmer, whenever he has acquired sufficient riches to pay his usual rent in unfavourable years. It exempts him more completely from interference in the management of his land, and from disagreeable suspicions, or unjust blame, when his crops are less abundant; and it stimulates him to greater exertions, by securing to him the undivided fruits of superior industry and skill. At first, these agreements for rent will be annually renewed, and the tenant will consequently take care to employ no more capital on the land, than he expects to receive back with a profit at the end of the year. But at last, it is discovered that leases for a longer term are advantageous to both parties; and the farmer, now secure in the possession of the same farm for several successive crops, is encouraged to lay out his capital in more permanent improvements, by which, without any expense to the proprietor, the value of the land is gradually increased.

In all this progress, from the maintenance of farm servants to the introduction of regular lea-

ses, the whole profits of agriculture, whether reaped by the master, or divided between the landholder and tenant, whether consisting in the annual returns, or the more permanent improvement of the lands, are the excess of the produce of labour aided by capital, over the expenditure of the labourers, and the charge of keeping up the farming stock. It may all be considered, in this sense, as the fruits of privation; or, in other words, it has arisen from the individuals employed in agriculture having consumed less, than, during the same time, they had produced.

The profits derived from manufactures and commerce are also the fruits of privation taken in this general sense.

Some of the inhabitants, in place of maintaining farm servants with those funds which they have accumulated, purchase the rude produce of the land, and maintain workmen, by whose labour it is changed in its form, and improved in its uses. The commodities, which they have procured in this manner, can be exchanged for a greater quantity of food and clothes, or of money with which food and clothes may be purchased, than was used by the workmen during the progress of the manufacture. The goods produced are more valuable, more capable of yielding enjoyment, than those that have been consumed; and this surplus, which may be viewed as the savings of the workmen from the produce of their labour, forms the profit of the capital employed by their master.

These profits occasion no loss to those who purchase the commodity. On the contrary, the consumer, though he should pay somewhat higher for the article than if he had himself employed the workman, will receive a full equivalent for the extra price. He saves all the time which he must have lost in seeking out both the material and the workman; he gets the commodity at the very time, and in the very state, in which he wants it; and he avoids all risk of being deceived in the quality of the material or the execution of the work. These advantages enhancing in his estimation the value of the article, he prefers paying a higher price, to incurring the risk of trouble, delay, and ultimate disappointment. This advance of price, therefore, is strictly a new value of the labour arising from the mode in which it has been employed, and belongs to the person by whose capital that new value has been created.

But, in general, the master manufacturer, by his knowledge of the qualities of the material, by purchasing it at the most favourable time, by subdividing the various processes of the manufacture, and confining each workman to one simple operation, and still farther, by the employment of machinery, which probably might never have been invented, and certainly could never have been procured, by workmen destitute of capital; by all these advantages, he is enabled to produce much more of the article in the same

period of time, and to furnish it of a quality much superior to what could be manufactured by the same number of unassisted and uncombined labourers. All this additional produce, whether consisting in increased quantity, or improved quality, is the consequence of the employment of his capital, and remains with him, as the profit on his stock, after he has replaced the money expended on the subsistence of the workmen and the support of the machinery, and has also delivered to the consumers the full value of what he receives from them in exchange. In different manufactures, the advantages derived from capital are very various; and so also would be the profits, were not these equalized, in the several branches of trade carried on in the country, by the competition of the capitalists, each endeavouring to derive the highest profit from the employment of his stock.*

A third class of the inhabitants having learned that particular commodities are more in request in one part of the country than in another, or in some foreign state than where they are produced, employ their capitals in purchasing, transporting, and selling such commodities.

* See Millar's Hist. View of the English Government, vol. IV. Chap. III., and Lauderdale's Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Public Wealth, Chap. III.

It is singular that Dr Smith should have omitted to explain in what manner the employment of capital produces profit, otherwise than by the division of labour and employment of machinery.

By sending an article from a country where it abounds, to one in which, from its greater scarcity, it is more in demand, they can procure in return some other article which they can afterwards exchange for a greater quantity of the first commodity than they had exported. A part of the tobacco acquired in America, in exchange for a cargo of British manufactures, will purchase in Britain a new assortment of articles equal to the whole of what had formerly been sent abroad. In like manner, a part of the manufactures received in Britain, in exchange for a cargo of tobacco, will again purchase in America as much tobacco as had formerly been shipped. Were the tobacco to remain in America, and the hardware in England, an inhabitant of each country would consume a greater portion of the means of enjoyment, in spending a certain fixed income, without receiving any greater gratification. The Englishman, by possessing a smaller quantity of tobacco, the American, by possessing a smaller quantity of hardware, can each of them command as many comforts, and procure as many gratifications, as by being possessed of a greater quantity of the productions of their respective countries. But while they both receive their full measure of enjoyment, as is abundantly proved by their readiness to make the exchange, part of each commodity is withdrawn from their consumption, and retained by the merchant as a compensation for the charges

of transportation, and for the employment of his stock.

It is true, that each consumer might have acquired the article which he wanted, by exporting such a quantity of home produce, or of gold and silver, the common medium of exchange, as would have purchased it in the foreign market; and that, in this way, the merchant's profit might have been saved. But, besides that he might not have got an article precisely suited to his taste, or at the time when he was most desirous of possessing it, he must probably have lost much more by his ignorance of the best market, the carelessness of the person employed to effect the sale of the one commodity and the purchase of the other, and, above all, by the diversion of his capital from its usual investment, than the amount of any profit with which he could be charged by the merchant. This profit, then, like all others, arises from a saving of the articles produced by human labour, though the saving is made by the consumer, not the transporter, of the commodity. It may therefore, in one sense, be viewed as the effect of parsimony or privation. In another aspect, it is entirely a new value arising from the transport of goods, and remaining with the merchant, after he has dispensed, to the several consumers, means of enjoyment, in their estimation, fully equal to those which they have parted with in return. In common with all other profits, the amount of that derived from commerce is regu-

lated by the competition of capitalists, all eager to vest their capitals in the most advantageous manner.

In the nature of the various profits derived from the employment of capital, there seems, then, to be no essential difference; neither are those profits materially distinguished from the rent of land. Every kind of profit and of rent is the result of privation or of economy in the use of the several articles produced by ingenuity and labour. They are not, however, derived from the economy of the landholders and capitalists, but from that of their labourers, who enjoy less than they produce, or from that of the consumers, who resign a portion of their wealth in return for some equivalent advantage. In this exchange, no one is a loser; each receives as great a sum of enjoyment as he relinquishes, though in a different form; each has every gratification which his own labour or wealth could enable him to command; and, therefore, the rents and profits may justly be considered as a new and additional value arising from the employment of land and capital, and accruing to those to whom that land and capital belong.

If the proprietors, who receive these rents and profits, expend the whole of them for their own use, whether in necessaries, comforts, or luxuries, it is evident that, though they may all have lived better in consequence of this accession to their income, none of them will have added any thing

to his wealth at the end of the year; none of them will possess a greater store of the means of enjoyment, which he may afterwards consume, or which he may employ in the maintenance of an additional number of labourers. Should part of the rents or profits, however, be saved from the immediate consumption of their proprietors, the wealth of those by whom they have been reserved will be augmented, and this wealth will be employed as capital, in maintaining a greater number of labourers, in cultivating more land, in erecting more expensive machinery, or in extending commercial exchanges. The desire of bettering their condition, which, unless when withered by oppression, is the most vigorous and persevering passion of the human heart, will at all times prompt a number of the inhabitants to prefer future wealth to present gratification. By their economy, the capital of individuals, the aggregate of which is the national capital, will be daily increased, the amount of the annual profits will be progressive, and the produce of the land and labour augmented; in other words, the national opulence will advance with accelerated rapidity.

Economy, or privation, is therefore, not only the original source of profits, but also the only means by which capital can be accumulated; nor is there the least danger that this economy should ever proceed so far as to injure the demand for commodities, and in that way weaken the incite-

ments to industry. What is produced must indeed be consumed, otherwise there would soon be an overstock of every commodity, lowering the value of articles more rapidly than their quantity was augmented. But in the love of pleasure, and the desire of distinction, abundant provision has been made for continuing and increasing the demand for objects of real or imaginary gratification. A small decline in their price brings them within the reach of a large additional class of consumers, and thus the demand, which was inadequate to the quantity of commodities brought to market, is raised to its level. Besides, if in any one country, as, perhaps, was the case in Holland, habits of economy should be pushed to excess, it is likely that in neighbouring nations different circumstances, whether in the nature of the government, in the mode in which wealth has been acquired, or in that in which it is distributed among the several classes of the inhabitants, may have given force to habits of a very opposite tendency. The economical nation may therefore go on accumulating wealth by disposing of those productions to her more profuse and luxurious neighbours, for which there is an inadequate demand at home.

Such considerations might allay the fear of industry being endangered by penurious accumulation.* But the apprehension originates entirely

* Maxime XXII. "Que les proprietaires, et ceux qui exer-

in a very mistaken view of this accumulation. Unless when property is rendered extremely insecure, no person thinks of storing up any part of his savings in consumable, or even in the most durable, commodities; for by doing so, he could draw from them no additional riches. He employs that part of his income, which he does not choose to expend on his own gratification, in cultivating land, in maintaining workmen, in erecting machinery, in transporting goods. It is as regularly consumed as what he devotes to his own pleasures, though by a different set of people, who return to him, in the produce of their industry, what he may be considered as having lent them, together with a premium for its use. There is, therefore, the same demand for consumable commodities, as if he had expended his whole revenue on his own gratification. The kind of commodities in request will indeed be different: the poor do not use the same food, clothes, or habitations, with the rich; but the nature of the productions will rapidly suit itself to the demand, and the value consumed each year will be the same.

Other fears have been entertained, that capital might accumulate so rapidly as to be destitute of employment, and consequently to lose its value.

" cent des professions lucratives, ne se livrent pas à des epar-
" gnes steriles qui retrancheroient de la circulation et de la
" distribution une portion de leurs revenues ou de leurs
" gains."—*Physiocratie I^re. Partie. Maximes Generale.*

The demand for capital, it has been thought, is necessarily circumscribed by the state of society. When all the lands are cultivated, and all the people employed, additional capital would have no useful operation to perform; it would overstock every branch of trade, and reduce the rate of profit so much, that the increased stock could yield no greater annual returns, than had formerly been drawn from a more moderate capital. It would therefore only impoverish those who were formerly affluent, without adding any thing to annual reproduction or national wealth.

This apprehension, at least in the present state of the world, is entirely groundless. The first effect of a very sudden augmentation of capital must indeed be to sink, in some degree, the profits of stock. Its proprietors will rather take a small premium for its use, than allow it to lie entirely idle. The known and customary channels of trade will immediately overflow, and new courses will become necessary to carry off the surplus. By the reduction of profits, these new courses will almost as suddenly be opened up. A greater portion of waste lands will be improved; a superior system of husbandry will be generally adopted; manufactures, which had formerly declined, will now revive, and others altogether new will be established; more expensive, and at the same time more perfect, machinery will be erected; and many branches of foreign trade, which had formerly yielded what, at that

time, was an inadequate return, will be resorted to, now that the general rate of profit has declined. A very small reduction of the average profit of stock will thus afford employment to a very considerable amount of additional capital, and commerce will again revert to her accustomed regularity.

A demand altogether new is, at the same time, opened up for the produce of this additional capital. In as far as the amount of the annual rents and profits is increased, the expenditure of landholders and capitalists is likely to keep pace with their incomes; while an additional consumption will also be encouraged among the people. The new capital must occasion an unusual demand for labour, and, consequently, a general advance in the rate of wages. The effect of this must be to distribute a greater portion of the means of enjoyment among the people, and, although some might embrace the opportunity of beginning a little accumulation of wealth, many more will be apt to prefer present gratification; to enlarge the circle of their enjoyments, from which a new demand for commodities would instantly arise; or to contract marriages, by which the population and consequent consumption and reproduction of the country would, in a very short time, be augmented.

If, after all, the accession of capital were so immense, that it could find no employment in manufacture or trade properly belonging to the

country, there is always the resource of sending it where it may be more in demand. A portion of it would go abroad as loans, at a stipulated interest, to foreign governments, or to the subjects of foreign states; but much the greater part would be gradually and imperceptibly withdrawn from the country, by means of the extension of the term of ordinary credit. The demand for capital being greater abroad than at home, the profits of stock would also be higher. The merchant residing in a foreign country could therefore afford to give such a reduction, for prompt payment, on the goods which he sold, and such an advance of price, as a compensation for an extended credit, on those which he bought, as would more than make up to his correspondent any profit which the latter could expect toderive from a more quick return and a new investiture of his capital. All credit is merely the transfer of wealth, from one person to another, for a limited time. The merchant of an opulent country, when he sells at six months credit, makes over to his correspondent for that period a certain portion of his stock, which reverts to him at the expiration of the time agreed upon; and if he extend this credit to twelve months, and sell the same quantity of goods during the year, he exactly doubles the amount of the debt which, at any particular period, is owing to him by the inhabitants of foreign countries. In this way,

then, any amount whatever of capital may be sent abroad, until a demand for it arise at home.

During its absence, indeed, it neither increases the annual production of the country to which it belongs, nor, by exchanging it, gives any new value to that production; it maintains and extends foreign, not domestic, industry; and its whole uses, with the exception of its profit, are transferred. But it is not, on that account, lost to the nation. Whenever a demand for it is felt, whether from the public exigencies, the ingenuity of the people, or the acquisition of a new branch of trade, the term of credit, which is no longer advantageous to the capitalist, is immediately restricted, and the capital, in a very short time, recalled. While abroad, it yields a profit to its proprietor, which, if spent, encourages domestic industry, and, if saved, increases the amount of his stock: and the moment it is wanted, that is the moment it can be more productively employed at home, it returns again to form a part of the capital of the nation.

Whether a rapid acquisition of capital could be usefully employed, if every nation in the world had pushed agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, to their utmost possible extent, it probably may not be very important to enquire.

SECTION II.

Of the Distinction between Fixed and Circulating Capital.

The whole capital of a nation, independently of the land, has been divided by Dr Smith into two great classes, fixed and circulating.* Fixed capital yields a profit to its proprietor, without going out of his possession; circulating capital, only in consequence of passing away from him by consumption or exchange. Thus, the implements of agriculture, the machinery used in manufactures, the ships of the merchant, and the shop of the retailer, are all portions of fixed capital, which yield their annual profits while they continue to belong to the same proprietor; the food of labourers, the rude materials of manufactures, and the finished goods in the merchant's shop, are all portions of circulating capital, which produce nothing while they remain stationary and unchanged, but yield a profit to their proprietors whenever they pass out of their possession, for the purposes of consumption or exchange.

This distinction is perfectly accurate and just; but the difference between fixed and circulating capital may perhaps be explained from peculia-

* Wealth of Nations, Book II. Chap. I.

rities in the nature of each, more fertile in useful inferences.

Fixed capital is vested in things which are in themselves no objects of man's desire, which minister directly neither to his wants nor pleasures, which consequently never are intentionally consumed, or placed in that portion of a person's wealth devoted to his own enjoyments. They are valued not for themselves, but solely on account of their capacity of producing commodities which are the objects of desire.

Circulating capital, on the other hand, is vested in commodities which are in themselves the objects of man's desire, which minister directly to his wants or pleasures, which, sooner or later, pass into that portion of wealth destined by its proprietor to his own enjoyment, and, in yielding this enjoyment, they are more or less quickly consumed.

It does not weaken this distinction, that the same objects differently employed may successively belong to both of these classes of capital. A cow, after having yielded milk, may be sold to the butcher; leather, wood, and iron, may be formed into a machine. In the one case, what was fixed capital, producing its returns in a commodity altogether different from itself, is changed into circulating capital, and, being distributed by the butcher among his customers, is speedily consumed. In the other case, a number of articles,

each fitted to minister directly to human enjoyment, lose this quality by being combined together; they form a machine, in itself no object of human desire, but valued solely on account of those commodities, the proper objects of that desire, which it is capable of producing. Even the very same combination of similar materials may, according to circumstances, belong to either class. The mechanic who constructs a steam-engine erects a machine valued not for itself, but on account of the work which it is intended to perform; he who makes a model of a steam-engine produces what can perform no work, but may be valued as an object of taste or curiosity. The distinction is not in the absolute nature of the commodities which are placed in the respective classes, so much as in the mode in which they are made to minister to the wants and pleasures of man. Fixed capital supplies those wants or furnishes those pleasures indirectly; circulating capital performs the same offices, by the intrinsic qualities of the commodities in which it consists.

From this view of the distinction between fixed and circulating capital, some inferences may be drawn, which seem to be of considerable importance in the science of political economy.

I. The whole land is properly part of the fixed capital of a country. It is of no value in itself, but only on account of the articles of consumption which it produces: it does not

form any part of the wealth destined for the enjoyment of its proprietor, but remains as a fund from which the means of subsistence and enjoyment may annually be drawn. If pleasure-grounds, which produce little or nothing, are an exception to this rule, they only form an exception similar to that of the model of a machine deposited in a museum, or of a mill erected, not for use, but picturesque effect.

Land, indeed, seems different from other fixed capital in one respect. It is not the produce of human labour, but the bounty of nature. Its quantity is therefore unchangeable, admitting neither of increase nor of diminution according to human wants or desires. This distinction, however, is more apparent than real. The mere natural earth is little capable of affording any valuable produce. Its prolific powers may almost be said to be created by that human labour which has in a manner been incorporated with the soil. It is in consequence of draining, of clearing, of the extermination of noxious weeds, of intermixture of earths and manures, and of the various processes by which the soil is exposed to the influence of air, moisture, heat, and light, that a field becomes capable of returning the seed committed to it with an abundant increase. Nor is a machine, any more than a field, altogether created by human industry; the rude iron, the lea-

ther, the wood, and the stone, are all gifts of nature as much as the uncultivated land, and it is only their form and combination, which, like the improvement of the farm, they derive from the labours of man.

The quantity of land, it is true, is limited, but its prolific powers are not; at least in no country has agriculture yet approached that point at which farther improvement was impracticable. More capital may, therefore, at all times, be vested in the soil, in the same manner that more may be vested in any kind of machinery. There are no absolute limits to either, though both are circumscribed by the extent of the demand for their productions, and by the comparative advantages of the several employments of stock.

II. A common rate of profit does not so readily establish itself over all the employments of fixed, as over those of circulating, capital.

The commodities in which circulating capital is vested, being themselves the objects of human desire, are constantly passing from the producer or importer to those by whom they are enjoyed. As at every such time, the stock of the farmer, manufacturer, or merchant, is restored to him in money, or in some other commodity, an opportunity is afforded him of laying it out in a different speculation, if its former investiture was unprofitable. Should the merchant, on selling his cloth, find that his capital had not been bene-

ficially employed, he will take care to purchase, with the money which comes into his possession, some other article which he has reason to think will yield him a better return. On the other hand, if the profits of any particular branch of trade should be very high, additional capital will be allured to that employment, till, by competition between the dealers, each anxious to dispose of his commodities, the profits are reduced to the ordinary rate. For a short time, one branch of business may be more or less advantageous than others; but, if allowance be made for differences in the risk, in respectability, and in the amount of the requisite stock,* it will be found that the profits of all circulating capital may be considered as nearly equal.

The objects, however, in which fixed capital is vested, are not from time to time withdrawn for the purpose of consumption, but, remaining always entire, or at least decaying very slowly, capital once fixed in them cannot afterwards be otherwise directed. The proprietor of a machine may indeed sell it, and engage in a different trade, but where there is a seller there must also be a purchaser, and this purchaser having no desire for the machinery for his own gratification,

* In branches of trade requiring a large stock, there are fewer competitors, and profits are therefore somewhat above the ordinary rate.

must pay the price, not from the funds destined for his own consumption, but from that part of his wealth employed by himself, or by some person to whom it was lent, as circulating capital. After the purchase, therefore, an equal capital, though belonging to a different person, remains vested as before. Fixed capital, having thus no escape from a disadvantageous employment, may continue to yield a profit much under the ordinary rate.* It cannot, however, yield permanently a higher profit, except as a compensation for greater risk, because the immediate consequence would be to allure capital from other employments, and to fix an additional part of what had formerly been circulating.

In the same manner, land may permanently yield a lower profit than a portion of circulating capital, which was formerly considered as equal to it in value. Should the population of a country decline from oppressive laws, or be suddenly decreased by a pestilence, the demand for corn would evidently be reduced. The quantity of

* When fixed capital in this situation is sold, its price will decline, so that the new purchaser will secure the usual rate of profit for his outlay. But he does this at the expense of the seller, whose wealth, equally with his, forms part of the capital of the nation. After such a sale, profits may again be equalized, but only by the diminution of the amount of capital on which the rate of profit is calculated. The profits on circulating capital are equalized without any such sacrifice of wealth.

corn, however, would not suffer a similar reduction, as every proprietor would prefer a smaller return to the total abandonment of his lands. The same quantity of land being cultivated as formerly, and the demand for its produce being less, the general rate of rents, whatever were the ordinary profits of stock, would necessarily decline. On the other hand, if it could be conceived that the whole lands were improved to the utmost, no limits, independently of importation, could be assigned, in a prosperous country, to the rise of rents; because, while the demand for rude produce increased, no greater supply could be procured. But as hitherto there has always been abundance of land, either waste or imperfectly cultivated, circulating capital proportioned to the demand (unless in so far as this is prevented by impolitic regulations), has been directed to the reclaiming of wastes, and the more complete culture of the land; and the quantity of the additional fixed capital having thus been in some measure proportioned to the increasing consumption of the produce of the soil, the returns have been partly regulated by the average rate of other profits. That they have not been entirely so, is to be ascribed to the practice of entails in Scotland, to the tithe in England, to the injudicious preference of trade and manufactures over agriculture created by our commercial code, and to the increasing diffi-

culty and expense of improving lands less fertile, and more remote from the principal markets.

III. It follows from these observations, that any diminution of the demand for a particular commodity produced partly by fixed, and partly by circulating, capital, must exclusively affect the profits of the former. In all circumstances, circulating capital must yield the usual profit of the country; if it yield less, it will speedily be repelled from that particular employment; if more, additional stock will speedily be allured to it, till the equilibrium be restored. The consequence, however, of withdrawing circulating capital, would be to render the fixed of no value whatever. The most fertile field would soon become waste, if it were not cultivated by a farming capital; and the most ingenious machine would be useless, unless its operations were aided, and the rude materials supplied, by the stock of the manufacturer. The proprietor of the fixed capital will consequently prefer a reduction of his income, to the withdrawing of the circulating capital, by which he would be deprived of the whole of it; and he can hold out no other inducement to the proprietor of the circulating capital to continue it in its former employment, than the resignation of such a part of the annual returns as will secure to him a profit equal to what he could have procured in a different branch of trade. The profit of fixed capital may there-

fore be extremely depressed, while that of the circulating capital, employed in the same manufacture, is at the average rate of the country. The former, indeed, is merely what remains of the produce, after replacing the latter with a profit regulated by the ordinary profits of other employments of circulating stock.

For a short time, fixed capital may also yield a profit higher than the ordinary rate; but as soon as this is discovered, more circulating will be changed into fixed capital, and the equilibrium will be restored. This disadvantage of fixed capital, that its profits can never be permanently raised above the ordinary rate of the country, although they may be depressed to a great extent, and for a long period of time, must be compensated by some equivalent advantage, to render such an investiture eligible; and on this account, although occasionally the trade, like others, may be overdone, it is probable that the average profits of machinery must be somewhat higher than those of other kinds of stock.

In most of these respects, land is perfectly similar to machinery. Should any circumstance lower the value of agricultural produce, the farmer, at the end of the lease, would offer only such a rent as would leave him the ordinary profit on the circulating capital which he employed; and, on the other hand, should any thing occur to raise the value of the produce, the

whole advantage would ultimately rest with the landholder, who, in consequence of the competition of farmers, would be enabled to advance the rent, till such time as new lands were brought into cultivation, or the improvement in farming had produced an additional crop, corresponding to the additional demand.

IV. For the same reasons, fluctuations in branches of trade employing expensive machinery are more detrimental, than in those carried on almost entirely by circulating stock. In the one case, although the manufacturer or merchant may be put to inconvenience, he suffers no material loss. In the other, part of his capital is reduced in value, or perhaps totally annihilated. Were muslins no longer to be worn as an article of dress, the importers of cotton wool would immediately vest their capitals in some other commodity; the manufacturers, too, would soon employ their workmen in other kinds of labour more in demand; but the proprietors of looms and cotton-mills would suffer materially, as their fixed capital, no longer producing what was an object of desire, would entirely lose its value. It is thus, that a sudden demand, arising from fashion or caprice, may sometimes fix in machinery a considerable amount of capital, which, by another caprice, equally sudden, is lost to its proprietor and the nation: and thus, too, the political or commercial regulations of one state

may greatly injure another, by cutting off the demand for a particular commodity, to the production of which, in more favourable times, much fixed capital had been devoted.

SECTION III.

Of the Distinctions of Dr Smith and the French Economists, between productive and unproductive Labour.

Hitherto wealth and the means of enjoyment have been used as convertible terms; but, before entering on the consideration of the distinctions which have been supposed to exist between different branches of human industry, it may be necessary to examine how far this assumption is correct. When it is asserted that only some kinds of labour are productive, it must be meant that only they produce what is properly wealth; and consequently, before proceeding in the enquiry, we must accurately define what is to be understood by that term.

No person, perhaps, has formally restricted the meaning of the term, wealth, to the bare means of subsistence, for such a definition would have been too openly at variance with common language, and the common sense of mankind.

Yet those English authors who have excluded commerce and manufactures from the class of productive labour, merely because, adding nothing directly to the food of man, they enable no greater number of inhabitants to exist in the world, must be understood as using the term, wealth, in this signification. If they do not so restrict its meaning, their argument is inconclusive; for, unless the terms be synonimous, that may be very productive of wealth, which is quite unproductive of any of the means of subsistence.

This principle would set aside not only all manufactures, which merely change the form of what is already produced, and all commerce, which only changes its proprietor, but also a very great proportion of agricultural industry. The culture of hemp, flax, cotton, coffee, sugar, wine, and tobacco, none of them the food of man, must, according to this system, be held not only unproductive, but as directly barring production, by occupying that land which might have been employed in increasing the quantity of food.*

* It is almost unnecessary to state that the opinions of the French economists have been much misunderstood by their English proselytes. The following passage from *Physiocratie* will of itself prove that M. Quesnai was far from considering the means of subsistence as the only species of production or wealth.

" La culture des vignes est la plus riche culture du Roy-
" aume de France, car le produit net d'un arpent de vignes,

Mere food, however, without those essential comforts by which life is rendered desirable, does not seem to be the sole or principal object which should be aimed at by an intelligent government; nor indeed, in most climates of the world, could life itself be long preserved, without some kind of clothes and hovels, to protect the inhabitants from the inclemencies of the weather.

Should we extend the signification of the term wealth, so as to include under it whatever may be requisite to healthful existence, we should be forced to admit inferior workmen into the productive class, while we continued to exclude those who, by superior neatness or ingenuity, produced articles similar in their nature, but much more highly prized. The weaver, who, from coarse materials, prepared a rough, though warm cloth, would belong to the one class; he, who, by improved skill, manufactured a more beautiful and more pleasant article of dress, would be ranked in the other. The mason and carpenter, while constructing a rude cabin, would be deemed productive; but the instant they gave neatness, comfort, or elegance, to the mansion, they would pass over to the sterile class of labourers. That distinction would be a singular one, which

" evalué du fort au foible, est environ le triple de celui du " meilleur arpent de terre cultivé en grains."

Maximes generales du Gouvernment. Note sur la Max. 13me.

confined the term productive to the least improved artificers, and admitted no articles but such as were rudely manufactured to be component parts of national wealth.

Indeed it is impossible to draw any line between those indulgencies which are necessary to healthful existence, and others which contribute only to ease or comfort. This depends on the particular constitution, health, and habits, of each individual. What is necessary to one, is an indulgence to another, and a mere luxury to a third. Before we admit, or reject, a commodity as forming part of the general wealth, we must, then, ascertain by whom it is to be consumed, and how far it may be conducive to his real well-being. Such an enquiry would be unsatisfactory, and, even if successful, it would be of no avail. A man's happiness is surely of as much importance to him as his life or his health; indeed it is chiefly, as contributing to the former, that the latter are prized; and it would be difficult to assign any sufficient reason for overlooking the end, and confining our attention entirely to the means. It is of no consequence that to one person the pleasures of another seem capricious or absurd. One is fond of particular wines, another of a showy equipage, a third of rare jewels or rich furniture; one is delighted with music, while others prefer paintings, statues, or medals, minerals, butterflies, or shells. To each other they

may appear to have placed their happiness in what can afford little gratification ; but their willingness to exchange objects which all concur in prizing, for what they respectively consider as objects of desire, is a sufficient proof that to them, though not to others, all these are sources of real enjoyment.

Wealth, therefore, may consist in whatever is the object of man's desire, and every employment which multiplies these objects of desire, or which adds to their property of yielding enjoyment, is productive. Labour, accordingly, will be entitled to a place in the productive class, whenever it affords a profit, or, in other words, produces more of the means of enjoyment than it consumes ; and this description will be found applicable to every species of industry employed by capital.

The proprietor of capital must always be desirous of vesting it in such a manner, as, besides returning to him his present stock at periods more or less distant, and compensating every risk of loss, may afford a profit or premium for its use. Without the expectation of this profit, he could have no inducement to engage in any speculation, but, storing up his wealth in the most durable commodities, he would reserve it for his own consumption. But when he finds, that, by maintaining workmen, or transporting commodities, he can not only secure his wealth from decay,

but add to its amount, he is induced to bring forth his stores from his warehouses, and to employ them in a way conducive both to his own interests and those of his countrymen.

The profit which each proprietor of capital is enabled to make by its use is altogether regulated by the general rate, which the amount of capital, compared to the demand for it, may have established in the country. If there be little capital, and a great demand for the articles which it manufactures or imports, those by whom that capital is possessed will be enabled to procure a higher premium for its use. If, on the other hand, stock accumulates more quickly than new channels present themselves for its employment, the eagerness of the several capitalists to prevent its remaining useless in their hands will induce them to undersell each other, that is, to be content with a smaller profit, rather than incur the risk of their capitals being for a time unproductive. It is thus, that the average rate of profit is regulated by the demand compared to the amount of capital, and it has already been shown in what manner this average rate reduces to a species of equality all the various employments of stock required by the circumstances of the nation.

The utility, variety, or beauty of the commodities, though qualities which enhance their respective values, have no effect on the profits of

those by whom they are manufactured or sold. He who produces what is of the most capricious estimation, if he produce it in no larger quantity than to satisfy the existing demand, will receive the same profit as if it were an article of the first necessity.

The durability of a commodity, which, being another component part of its actual value, influences the demand, has as little effect in regulating the profit which it yields. Whatever the demand may be, the supply is quickly suited to it; and the rate of profit, whether the commodity be fitted to last a thousand years, or necessarily perishes in the instant of its production, is the same with that which would have accrued from any other employment of stock. Nothing can be of a more perishable nature than the speech of an actor; yet the manager of the theatre, by whom the actor is fed and clothed, has his capital as regularly returned to him with its profit as the manufacturer of the most durable commodity. His capital, too, is as much a part of the national wealth, as that of any other inhabitant; and it may at any time be changed from its present, to any other employment. Nor is there any difference in the way in which its profits are drawn from the people. The frequenters of the theatre, like the customers of the baker, have received what they consider as an equivalent for the money which they have paid. In doing so,

they have no doubt expended, in their respective gratifications, part of the wealth or command of enjoyments which they formerly possessed. But after the expenditure is completed, whether by the amusement of the theatre, or the more substantial pleasure of devouring the loaf, the quantity of wealth remaining in the country is exactly the same. The capital of the manager of the theatre, in the one case, that of the baker in the other, has been returned to its proprietor with a profit. But to the national wealth, it is wholly immaterial whose capital has been replaced, for it makes no difference in the quantity of the means of enjoyment possessed by the whole of the inhabitants.

As every employment of capital is productive, so every expenditure of wealth on the pleasures or comforts of its proprietor is wholly unproductive. The one supports its own value and amount, returning from time to time to the person by whom it is employed, and, at each return, furnishing him with a profit which is an addition to his wealth ; the other, in ministering to his wants and desires, is consumed, and can no longer be reckoned as part of his possessions. Every kind of expenditure, in whatever it may consist, directs what was, or might have become, capital, to a gratification from which no return whatever is expected.

But although expenditure always consumes

part of the existing wealth, all modes of it do not diminish wealth with the same rapidity. The durability of the commodities destined by their proprietor to his own gratification is, in this point of view, a very material consideration. In so far as one article is of a more perishable nature than another, a greater portion of the means of enjoyment is, in each division of time, used and consumed. He, who gives an entertainment which costs a thousand pounds, is next morning so much poorer than he was the day before. If, with this thousand pounds, he had purchased furniture, though he must have withdrawn the same sum from his commercial capital, he would have consumed but a very minute portion of it in one night, and some part of it would have remained in his possession, as a reserved fund of enjoyment, after the lapse of many years. Had he expended it upon a statue, he must, in like manner, have withdrawn it from its more profitable uses; but if the statue retained its value, his wealth would be entirely preserved. By the first mode of expenditure, a thousand pounds are consumed in one night; by the second, perhaps only a twenty thousandth part of that sum in the same portion of time; and by the third, though future profits are relinquished, nothing whatever has ceased to exist. An equal expenditure in one of these ways is not more hurtful than in the others, but in equal times, the expenditure, or consumption, of the

means of enjoyment, is in reality to a much larger amount.

It seems to be from ascribing to the nature of the labour that consequence of the durability of commodities which relates solely to the amount of expenditure, that Dr Smith has been led, somewhat inaccurately, to distinguish between productive and unproductive labour.

"There is one sort of labour," he observes, "which adds to the value of the subject upon "which it is bestowed: there is another which "has no such effect. The former, as it produces "a value, may be called productive, the latter "unproductive, labour. Thus the labour of a "manufacturer adds, generally, to the value of "the materials which he works upon, that of his "own maintenance, and of his master's profit. "The labour of a menial servant, on the contra-"ry, adds to the value of nothing. Though the "manufacturer has his wages advanced to him "by his master, he, in reality, costs him no ex-"pense, the value of those wages being general-"ly restored, together with a profit, in the im-"proved value of the subject on which his la-"bour is bestowed. But the maintenance of a "menial servant never is restored. A man grows "rich by employing a multitude of manufac-"turers; he grows poor by maintaining a mul-"titude of menial servants. The labour of the "latter, however, has its value, and deserves its

" reward, as well as that of the former. But the " labour of the manufacturer fixes and realizes " itself in some particular subject or vendible " commodity, which lasts, for some time at least, " after that labour is passed. It is, as it were, a " certain quantity of labour stocked and stored " up to be employed, if necessary, upon some " other occasion. That subject, or, what is the " same thing, the price of that subject, can after- " wards, if necessary, put into motion a quanti- " ty of labour equal to that which had originally " produced it. The labour of the menial servant, " on the contrary, does not fix or realize itself in " any particular subject or vendible commodity. " His services generally perish in the very in- " stant of their performance, and seldom leave " any trace or value behind them for which an " equal quantity of service could be afterwards " procured.

" The labour of some of the most respectable " orders in the society is, like that of menial ser- " vants, unproductive of any value, and does not " fix or realize itself in any permanent subject, " or vendible commodity, which endures after " that labour is past, and for which an equal " quantity of labour could afterwards be procu- " red. The sovereign, for example, and all the " officers both of justice and war who serve un- " der him, the whole army and navy, are unpro- " ductive labourers. In the same class must be

" ranked some of the gravest and most import-
" ant, and some of the most frivolous, professions:
" churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters
" of all kinds, players, buffoons, musicians, ope-
" ra-singers, opera-dancers, &c. The labour of
" the meanest of these has a certain value, regu-
" lated by the very same principles which regu-
" late that of every other sort of labour; and
" that of the noblest and most useful produces
" nothing which could afterwards purchase or
" procure an equal quantity of labour. Like the
" declamation of the actor, the harangue of the
" orator, or the tune of the musician, the work
" of all of them perishes in the very instant of its
" production." *

This distinction, if understood, as is intended by Dr Smith, to subsist between the several kinds of labour, not between labour purchased by a person for his own gratification and that employed by his capital for the gratification of others, although imposing at first view, is neither accurate nor of any importance.

All labour is intended to afford either immediate pleasure, or future gratification. The song of the musician, and the grimace of the buffoon, equally with a pair of silver buckles, or a suit of laces, have a value to him by whom they are enjoyed, equal in his estimation to their price; and

* Wealth of Nations, Book II. Chap. III.

although the pleasure which they yield may be transient, their finding a purchaser proves that it is not considered as less real. A song, indeed, is not calculated for realizing or storing up wealth; nor are lace ruffles so well adapted for that purpose as gold or silver. Neither of them will bear so high a value as if they were less perishable, nor will they be purchased by any one desirous of future, not immediate, gratification. In durability, however, there are various degrees incapable of accurate discrimination; and were this durability to be the ground of distinction, there must be as many degrees, in which the quality of being productive was ascribed to the several kinds of labour. If labour be termed productive merely because it "fixes and realizes itself in "some particular subject, or vendible commodi- "ty, which lasts, for some time at least, after that "labour is past," those kinds of labour should be considered as still more productive, of which, not one only, but many successive productions, may be stored up, and be co-existent. The labour of the blacksmith, according to this system, would be more entitled to the appellation of productive, than that of the farmer or baker; for the articles manufactured by the former may last for ages, and a vast number of successive productions may exist together, while the grain of the farmer is usually consumed within the year, and the loaf of the baker can be preserved

for only a few days. Abstractly considered, objects capable of some degree of permanent existence, may be distinguished from what must perish at the moment of their birth: but by using the terms productive and unproductive, Dr Smith conveyed the idea that labour is more usefully employed upon the one class than upon the other; or rather that labour employed in the one way tends to increase the national wealth, while that employed in the other can have no such effect. Accordingly, he always represents the tendency to divert labour from what he calls productive to unproductive employments as a decisive argument against any legislative measure.

But, if the distinction were practically of any value, it would seem more reasonable to found it on actual duration, than on the mere capacity of duration. Were a silversmith, the moment he had finished his trinkets, to sell them to a child who took pleasure in dashing them to pieces, his labour could scarcely be said to fix or realize itself, but, like the song of the musician, would perish at the instant of its completion. Such labour would be equally unproductive with that of a cook, who dressed a dinner to be immediately consumed. Were the same silversmith to sell his trinkets to a careful person, the fruits of his labour might remain for ages. In the same manner, whether a dress is to be worn out in a

few hours, or to be preserved for years, depends not on the labourer, but on the purchaser. The difference, therefore, does not lie so much in the nature of the labour, as in other circumstances unconnected with it.

Some kinds of labour, indeed, are capable of being vested in permanent commodities, others have no such capability; but it is not easy to see how a mere abstract capacity can have any effect upon the national wealth. What so like as the operations of dressing a dinner, and preparing portable soup? Because the one must be immediately consumed, while the other may or may not be packed up, and sent for consumption to a distant country, ought we to consider the one cook as essentially different from the other?

If any useful distinction can be established between different professions, it must surely be drawn from something intrinsically different in themselves, and not from what is casual, or at least entirely independent of the several labourers. In their own nature, however, there seems to be no essential difference between the several branches of human industry. The most fleeting produce of labour, a speech, a song, or a dance, replaces the maintenance of the actor, singer, or dancer, together with a profit both on his immediate subsistence, and on his previous education; and it does this at the expense of the person who

enjoys the fruits of the labour. The most permanent commodity, even if it happens to be long preserved, does no more. It is indeed, as has already been observed, a less expensive source of pleasure to the consumer, than what is less durable. He who pays, for an hour's music, the price of a pair of buckles, consumes in that hour as much of the means of enjoyment, as in the other mode he would have consumed in the course of years. But if he pay for his music no more than one hour's proportion of the price of the buckles, he expends no more in the one case than in the other, and capital is equally returned to its proprietor with a profit, though it is the capital, not of the silversmith, but of the musician.

It is true, as remarked by Dr Smith, that "a "man grows rich by maintaining a multitude of "manufacturers, and that he grows poor by main- "taining a multitude of menial servants." The reason is obvious. He employs the former for the gratification of others, the latter for his own ease or splendour; and it is always the person who enjoys the produce of the labour that ultimately pays the price. He who should himself make use of all the goods prepared by his workmen, would grow poor by maintaining manufacturers, just as quickly as by maintaining servants; and he, on the other hand, who should let out the service of his domestics for hire, would grow rich by maintaining servants, in the same way

as by any other employment of stock. Whoever enjoys the performance of the actor, the convenience of a servant, the delicacies of the table, the comfort or splendour of equipage and dress; whoever makes use of the necessaries or indulges in the luxuries of life, must consume part of the means of enjoyment which he formerly possessed: but the capital, which maintains the several labourers, and provides the materials on which their industry is employed, is in every case returned to its proprietor with a profit or increase; and in this sense (the only one that is either very intelligible or important,) all labour employed by capital is productive.

It has been thought, however, that there exists a fundamental distinction between labour employed in agriculture, and that by which commodities are changed in their forms, or transported to those places where they are most in demand.

The labour of manufactures, though it alters the properties of the rude produce, and fixes in various articles the value of what was consumed during the progress of the manufacture, is represented by the French economists as making no addition whatever to the existing wealth. During the several processes by which a quantity of flax is transformed into a suit of laces, the value of the raw material is indeed greatly increased: what formerly was worth a few shillings may now sell for five hundred pounds. But all this addi-

tional value, however great it may be, is only the maintenance of the workman, which has been advanced to him and consumed during the progress of the work. A value equal to what he has added to the flax must have formerly existed; that value, in proportion as the work proceeded, was gradually annihilated; and, at the period of the completion of the manufacture, it had been entirely transferred from the corn and clothes used by the manufacturer to the suit of laces which his labour produced. Every day's work was attended with a day's consumption, and the one was an exact measure of the value of the other. Were the wages of the labourer to be raised or lowered, there would be a proportionate variation on the value of his work; in the one case, more, in the other less, would both be consumed and produced. Next year, if there be a similar production of laces, a value exactly equal to what in the former year had been added to the flax must again be destroyed; and in the whole operation, though there is a transfer, there is no creation, of value. Nothing more being produced than what was consumed, nothing more than must again be consumed in repeating the process, there has been no increase in the means of enjoyment, and that labourer who returns his employer a value equal only to his wages, or maintenance, may well be termed sterile or unproductive.

Merchants have been represented as still more obviously unproductive. They may support the exchangeable value of the rude produce, and afford many conveniences to the proprietors of lands ; but, by exchange, nothing new can be produced, for whatever is exchanged must already exist. The profits of merchants, and those of master manufacturers, are their own maintenance, which, on account of the conveniences afforded by their capitals, they receive from the only possessors of real wealth, the proprietors of land. The greater their capitals, the more liberal will be their reward ; but whether it be liberal or scanty, it is not produced, either by their capital or their labour, but only transferred to them from others. After this transference is made, the quantity of the means of enjoyment remains unaltered, though part of the national wealth may have passed from one description of the inhabitants to another. Profits are requisite for the support of the capitalist, and induce him to continue his stock in those employments which, by keeping up the exchangeable value of the produce of the earth, encourage agricultural improvements ; but these profits are a transference, not a new production.

Labour employed in agriculture, like all other labour, reproduces the maintenance of the labourers, the capital by which that maintenance was advanced, and the ordinary profit on the

farming stock; but, besides this, it is considered by the economists as giving rise to a new value which did not formerly exist, which may justly be called a bounty of nature, and which, under the name of rent, belongs to the proprietors of the land. A hundred pounds will yield the same returns to the farmer as to the manufacturer or merchant; but if employed in agriculture, it also produces, perhaps, another hundred pounds of clear rent. It is only this last part of the crop which the economists consider as a new production. The capital which furnished the maintenance of the labourer, repaired the implements of agriculture, and purchased the seed, formerly existed, and is merely renewed; the farmer's profit is a remuneration for the use of his capital, without which it would be withdrawn from agriculture. All this is consumed during the year, and annually returned by the crop. But the nett rent is an additional production, which, not having previously existed, was not previously consumed, and of which the consumption is, in no respect, necessary for the ensuing reproduction.*

In this system, no distinction is made between the various products of the earth according to their fitness for sustaining human life. The culture of tobacco, if it yield a better rent, is considered as more productive than that of grain,

* See Physiocratie, or L'ami des Hommes.

and fisheries, though they furnish food, unless they also yield rent, must be classed with the sterile employments of stock. " Il n'y a," says M. Quesnai, " que les travaux productifs qui puis-" sent se defrayer eux mêmes, et fournir de plus " le surcroit de richesses qui forme les revenus " de nations ; c'est par ces avantages qu'ils dif-" ferent essentiellement de travaux steriles dont " on paye les frais, et qui ne rapportent rien au " dela des frais.*

The most obvious defect of this system seems to be in representing the profits of stock as merely the maintenance of the capitalist, and the consumption of those profits as requisite for continuing the annual reproduction.

It has already been shewn that fixed capital is in nothing different from land ; that it equally requires the co-operation of circulating capital to make it yield any produce ; and that, when assisted by circulating capital, it affords a regular rent. This rent is no doubt similar to the returns which the proprietor of land receives for his original improvements and stocking of the farm ; for what the economists denominated the primitive advances, the profits of which they do not consider as productive.† But had they deducted from the annual returns the whole of that part which

* Physiocratie, IIde Partie, Ier Dialogue.

† Physiocratie ; Analyse du Tableau Economique. L'ami des hommes ; Tab. Econ. considerê dans sa construction.

originated in those primitive advances, they would have left little or nothing as the nett production of the soil. The value of land in its natural state, independently of manuring ,draining, and other operations by which its fertility is both increased and directed to the production of useful plants, is in most cases very trifling; nor is it possible, in any instance, to ascertain what that original value may be. The improvement has usually been continued through a succession of ages, and what is frequently looked upon as natural fertility has in reality been acquired. When a field is very rapidly improved, it is more obvious that all the additional produce is the fruit of human labour, or of capital employed on the land; and he who should set apart the portion which it yielded in its uncultivated state, would find it equally insignificant with the returns that might have been drawn from the wood used in machinery while in its forest, or the iron in its mine. That the investment of capital inland was, in many instances, slow and unperceived, can make no alteration in the nature of the returns which it yields. Had the economists, therefore, made a fair allowance for the profits of what they call the primitive advances, there would have remained little or nothing for the nett rent, and agricultural labour also must have been pronounced unproductive.

It is not easy to see, however, on what account

the returns of the primitive advances, except in so far as they are employed in maintaining the condition of the land and farming stock, should be represented as requisite for the future culture. To this degree they are charges on the farm similar to the repairs of machinery, and must be deducted, before the profit, or nett rent, can be ascertained. But whatever remains after this deduction, whether arising from the improvement of a farm, or the erection of machinery, is a new creation of value which did not formerly exist, and of which the consumption is not requisite for an ensuing reproduction to the same extent. It is completely, in the sense of the economists, a revenue to its proprietor, which may be entirely consumed without diminishing the wealth that formerly existed.

The profit of circulating capital, too, is indirectly represented as the necessary maintenance of its proprietor; for its amount is dependent neither on his expenditure, nor even on his existence. Manufacturing or commercial capital, if directed with the same prudence, will yield the same returns to a miser as to a prodigal, to an infant as to a man. The salary of the proprietor, when he manages the business, is indeed sometimes confounded with the profits of stock. That salary is properly the wages of his labour, and when there are more partners than one, it is always deducted before the profits are ascertained.

But all that remains to be divided, after this deduction, may belong to persons who interfere with the management of trade, no more than the landlord with the culture of the farm; to those who deliver over a certain amount of capital, as the landlord does of land, and receive a fixed proportion of the profits for its use. These profits did not exist before, any more than the rent of land; nor is their consumption at all requisite to next year's reproduction, which, if the same capital be employed, will be to the same amount. They are a revenue to the capitalists by whom they may be consumed, without impoverishing either themselves or the nation; or by whom they may be accumulated, not merely to support, but to increase, the annual reproduction. They are the exact measure, not of the expnediture of any person whatever, but of the new value, after deducting the wages of the labourers, which, by the alteration of its form, or the change of its place, has been added to some particular object of desire. Nor are these profits any more at the expense of the consumer of the article, than the rent of the landholder is at the expense of the consumer of the grain; for in all cases, the purchaser of a commodity must receive what he considers as an equivalent for the price.

It is true, that if the profit could be lowered, without any other change in the circumstances of the country, all consumers of the commodity

would be richer, as they would have more revenue to expend on other gratifications. The same is equally true with regard to the rent of land. Were it reduced, each person, after purchasing his food, would be able to afford a greater number of comforts or luxuries. But exactly in proportion as the consumers were enriched, the landlords or capitalists would be impoverished. The rate both of rent and of profit is determined by the demand for land and capital, and their amount is the exact measure of the addition which, in the particular circumstances of the country, has been made, by their employment, to the objects of desire. This addition, whether it be called rent or profit, may either be consumed without injuring next year's production, or transformed into new capital, by which that production will be increased.

From the opinion, that the produce of labour merely replaces the maintenance of the labourers, the singular inference would follow, that the utmost industry, ingenuity, or skill of man, could add nothing to national wealth. However rich the workman himself might become, his opulence is represented as at the expense of other members of society, and therefore as transferred to him, without any accession to what formerly existed. Except by holding out new inducements to agriculture, his exertions end in replacing, without addition of any kind, what he has

consumed. Such a paradox, we may be assured, proceeds from some erroneous conception.

The simplest view that can be taken of the expense and production of a labourer, is to consider him as a slave fed by his master, and working for his advantage. Two slaves of very different abilities and attainments, it is obvious, may be fed at equal expense. The one can only carry burdens, or perform some rude kind of labour, for which his master receives a shilling a day; the other, having cultivated a genius for the arts, paints portraits, by which, in the same time, he earns a guinea. It can scarcely be denied, that the latter, while consuming no more than the former, has produced what is more than twenty times the value, and consequently, that he has added more than twenty times the amount of his usual subsistence to the means of enjoyment formerly existing. Nor is this surplus produce, as was supposed by the economists, the remuneration of his maintenance and other expenses incurred during a long course of study; for, while his education was going on, the artist, by painting at lower rates, may have fully maintained himself. To his master he is, in truth, an estate, though of a less permanent kind than one in land; and his wages, after deducting his subsistence, are the nett rent which he yields. These wages he does not receive without furnishing an equivalent to his employer, and therefore, after

his work is completed, the existing means of enjoyment have evidently been increased.

But it is said that competition must reduce the wages of free labour to a mere maintenance, although that maintenance may be more or less liberal in different professions. He who receives higher wages will be accustomed, and will be expected, to expend more on his subsistence and on that of his family; so that, whether he receive much or little, what he has produced in the course of the year will be the exact measure of what he has consumed. That this is frequently the case is undoubted; but it is far from being necessarily so. In all countries where property is fully protected, numerous instances may be found of workmen rising from the very lowest to respectable stations in life, by accumulating the excess of their production over their expenditure; a sufficient proof that, with regard to them at least, the former has not been the measure of the latter.

Even those labourers (if in ordinary circumstances there be any such) who earn a bare subsistence, have paid the price of their maintenance without diminishing the happiness of any human being; and, therefore, in as far as their own existence is an enjoyment, have increased by their labour the sum of national wealth. Such as earn more than this are more productive, whether they expend their wages on their own gra-

tifications, or accumulate them into a little stock. The subsistence of a workman may be considered as the charge of supporting that capital which consists in his life, health, and strength; whatever exceeds this, as the profit on that capital. Had he never existed, or had he refused to work, there might have been no charge for his maintenance, but neither would there have been that quantity of enjoyment which he furnished in return for his maintenance, nor the surplus of his wages which he might enjoy for immediate pleasure, or store up for future use. Even if mere existence be accounted nothing, the gratifications which he has enjoyed, or the capital which he has accumulated, must be allowed to constitute as real an addition to human happiness, as any which arises from profits or from rents; and in so far at least, his labour must be acknowledged to have been productive. That labour surely is improperly characterised as sterile, which adds either to the amount of national wealth, or to what is the sole use and end of wealth, the enjoyments and welfare of the people.

SECTION IV.

Of the Principles by which the Interference of Government, in relation to Capital and Industry, should be regulated.

Among the several ways in which capital may be employed, all of them, as we have seen, productive, it seems reasonable to conclude, that each capitalist will select that which promises to yield him the highest profits. There may indeed be other inducements to engage in particular trades besides their annual returns. One may be more respectable or less hazardous than another; previous habits may have produced a taste for a particular pursuit, or previous acquirements may have rendered it more than usually beneficial. But all these and similar advantages are in reality parts of the profit, as they afford some rank, some reputation, some security, or some pleasure, which are equivalent to a certain sacrifice of annual revenue. Every man must be the best, and, indeed, the only well-informed, judge of what is most likely to contribute to his own happiness; and, accordingly, when we know that any particular branch of business is carried on, we may pronounce, with the utmost certainty, that, in some way or other, it is conducive to the interests of part of the inhabitants. It is not likely that the advice or direction of government

would be attended with advantage in the management of the private affairs of any individual; and, the interest of the state being the aggregate interests of the whole inhabitants, it seems scarcely possible that what is beneficial to no particular person can be conducive to the welfare of the community. In so far, therefore, as the interference of government alters the natural flow of capital and industry, it seems reasonable to conclude, that it will direct it in a manner less profitable to the manufacturer or merchant, and consequently less advantageous to the nation.

To the individual this loss may be compensated. Government never singles out a manufacturer or merchant, and orders him to employ his capital in a particular branch of industry. The injustice of such an interference would be too apparent, and the uncertainty of property arising from it too vexatious and tyrannical. But what cannot be done directly has often been done indirectly, in away, which, though in general disadvantageous to other classes of society, and not unfrequently injurious to the progress of national wealth, leaves to the person immediately affected by the regulation no ground of complaint.

Sometimes the deficiency of profit, in a branch of trade which government wishes to encourage, is compensated by a bounty on production or on exportation. This is evidently to direct a part

of the national capital to a less advantageous employment, than it would otherwise have found for itself. The private interests of individuals will, in every case, lead them to seek the most profitable employments for their wealth, and, in making their choice among the several branches of business which are open to them, they will seldom err. Without the interference of government, the whole mercantile stock will be vested in the manner best adapted to bring in the greatest annual returns which circumstances will permit. But if the state, from the presumption of the rulers, or from any particular views of policy, be desirous that part of the capital should be employed so as to yield a lower profit, it is just that this deficiency should be made up to its proprietor by a contribution from the other inhabitants.

It ought never, however, to be forgotten, that this contribution is drawn from the people without any immediate equivalent. It is so much deducted from the revenue of every person on whom the tax for defraying the bounty has been levied. To them it is exactly the same thing (however much it may be disguised by a complicated system of taxation), as if their land or capital had yielded them a smaller annual return. The support of any trade by a bounty is, therefore, an impoverishment of the nation to the ex-

tent of the bounty and of all the charges attending the tax by which it is paid.

In other cases, a particular branch of trade is encouraged by laying heavy duties on the introduction of rival commodities from foreign states, or by prohibiting their importation. A manufacture which, under a free competition, could not have yielded the ordinary profits of stock, is thus protected from that competition: those who might undersell being excluded from the market, the price of the commodity is raised, and the manufacturer is put on a footing with other tradesmen. This encouragement, like the last, is altogether at the expense of other members of the society. Though it is not the cause of any general tax, the amount of which may be calculated, it lays a real tax to an undefined extent on all those by whom the article is consumed. A prohibition of foreign silks, or a high duty on their importation, enables the home manufacturers to raise their prices, till they derive from their capitals the ordinary profits of stock. But this additional price is paid by their customers without any additional enjoyment. Had the trade been free, the stock vested in the silk manufacture would have been otherwise employed so as to yield the same profit, and every consumer of silk might have purchased his usual quantity of that article of dress, at the same time reserving a sum, equal to the forced enhancement of the

price, for increasing his enjoyment, or augmenting his wealth.

Occasionally two nations enter into a compact, by which each gives some advantage to the produce of the other in their respective markets. The consequence of this agreement is, by narrowing the competition, to force the inhabitants of both countries to pay an advanced price for particular commodities, and, if the bargain be a fair one, to expose both to equal loss. Nor, in a pecuniary view, is this loss compensated to either by equivalent advantages. The profits in the branches so encouraged can never rise above the rate usual in each country, without immediately drawing capital towards those particular trades, till the level be again restored. The profits, therefore, in these favoured branches, will be no higher than in others, no higher than those which, without any interference of the state, would have been drawn from the same stock otherwise vested; and the whole effect of such treaties of commerce will be to direct capital belonging to both countries to disadvantageous employments. A stipulation, by which one nation pays a tax to another, on condition that part of the mercantile stock shall be misapplied, and that she shall receive a similar contribution for a similar purpose, cannot be very advantageous to either. In seeking mutual advantage, it can hardly fail to occasion reciprocal loss.

The justice of such measures is no less questionable, than their policy. Every citizen, indeed, is bound to contribute to the public exigencies according to his ability, because, from the expences of the state, he derives advantages more than equivalent to his contribution. But it would usually be very difficult to show that he who is taxed to pay a commercial bounty, or the consumer, who is obliged to purchase those articles for which he has occasion at an advanced price, derives any benefit, directly or indirectly, from branches of industry which he is thus forced to support. Even the dealers, whose interests seem to be particularly consulted, receive only the ordinary rate of profit on the stock employed; and it must be under very singular circumstances, that what impoverishes one class of the inhabitants, without enriching any other, can add to the wealth, power, or safety of the state.

If then the annual profits of stock were the only object of consideration, there could be no doubt of the propriety of establishing the most perfect freedom of trade; certain, as we should be, that in this respect private interests were coincident, or rather that they were precisely the same, with those of the community. But so general an argument is not entirely conclusive.*

* Not unfrequently Dr Smith reasons as if the profits of the

There may be other points of view in which these interests are different, or even opposite. There may, therefore, be special cases in which government is justified, by some object of general and important policy, in controuling the private interests of merchants, and in alluring, or even forcing, capital towards an employment in which, however useful it might be to the state, it could not, without public encouragement, be profitable to private adventurers.

I. It has already been remarked,† that fixed capital being unproductive, unless aided by a certain portion of circulating capital, whatever withdraws the latter from any particular manufacture, at the same time annihilates the value of the former. Circulating capital in particular employments may be viewed as producing two profits, one on itself, and another on the fixed, which, without its assistance, would be entirely unproductive. From this view it might be concluded, that, whenever part of the national wealth had been fixed in machinery, it became important to preserve its value; that this could be done only by securing the co-operation of circulating capi-

merchant were the measure of the benefit flowing to the state from his particular trade, although he had sufficiently proved (Wealth of Nations, Book II. Chap. V.) that the interests of the individual and those of the public might be opposed to each other.

† Section II. of this Chapter.

tal; and that, to effect this purpose, it might be expedient to grant some bounty on production, or to impose some restraint on the introduction of rival manufactures. The loss sustained by the disadvantageous employment of the circulating stock, it might be thought, would be amply compensated by the profits derived from the fixed.

It must be considered, however, that if the two together yield any thing more than the ordinary profit on the circulating capital, there is no danger of the manufacture being abandoned. However much the returns from the machinery may be reduced, it is the obvious interest of the proprietor to employ it himself, rather than relinquish those returns, or to let it to others, even for a very trifling rent. Should the trade be in that state that the circulating capital yields no more than its own profit, nothing which can be afforded as rent, the fixed capital has already lost the whole of its value, and, in so far as annual returns are concerned, ceased to exist. To raise the price of the manufactured goods on the consumer, or to pay the rent by a general tax on the inhabitants, would merely be to transfer part of the income of one person into the pocket of another, not to increase the aggregate revenues of all. The proprietor of the machinery has been impoverished by the fall of its value, but he has no claim on others because his speculations were un-

wise or unfortunate. The amount of the national capital has been diminished by part of it being vested in what yields no return, but that stock which has been lost can never be recovered, by giving to one person a right to share in the income of his neighbours.

It is true, when individuals have been led by direct encouragements to fix their wealth in any kind of machinery, they have a just claim to a continuation of the privileges originally granted, or to a fair compensation for their abolition. Having been seduced into an employment of their stock, from which it cannot afterwards be withdrawn, it would be unjust to throw upon them a loss occasioned by the general policy of the state. In such cases, if it should be desirable to recall the encouragements which had been held out to the manufacture (and this will usually be desirable in order to prevent more capital from being drawn to an unprofitable investment,) compensation ought to be made to the sufferers by a bounty on the produce of the machinery already erected, or rather by payment, once for all, of a sum equivalent to the probable loss.

This consideration ought to render government extremely cautious in holding out encouragements to the investiture of fixed capital. Branches of trade carried on entirely by circulating stock may, with much less inconvenience, though seldom with any real advantage, be regu-

lated according to the political views or commercial systems of a minister. The skill of the workmen, which is their fixed capital, when, by the change of public regulations, it is rendered less productive, may undoubtedly claim a fair compensation: But the circulating capital, as it can easily be withdrawn and otherwise employed, suffers no injury by the repeal of monopolies, bounties, or other specific encouragements, and therefore can be entitled to only such a length of notice, as may enable it, without precipitation, to diffuse itself over other branches of trade.

II. Although the profit is the only advantage which the proprietor of capital derives from its employment, it is not the only, or even the principal, advantage arising from it to the state. In some employments, being distributed as wages, capital furnishes subsistence and some gratifications or luxuries to the workmen; thus supporting population, and increasing the sum of human happiness: in other employments, it equally returns its profit to its proprietor, but yields no revenue or benefit whatever to any other member of the commonwealth.

A hundred pounds engaged in manufactures will pay the wages of two or three workmen through the year. These workmen, indeed, ultimately repay all, and more than all, which they receive; but during the progress of their work, they derive from the hundred pounds their own

subsistence and that of their families, together with such comforts as their wages can afford. Had there been no such stock provided, these workmen must either have perished for want, or emigrated to a foreign country, or overstocked the supply of hands in some other manufactory, and thus reduced the wages, and consequently the comforts, both of themselves and of others. The manufacturing capital, while it yielded its annual profit, has therefore created means of enjoyment (at least if existence be reckoned desirable) equal to its whole amount.

Had the same hundred pounds been employed in commerce, they would have yielded equal profit; but they might not have furnished subsistence directly to a single inhabitant of the country. The stock might have been locked up for a year in commodities, which, while lying in the warehouse, were always rising in value; or it might have paid the charges of transportation to foreign carriers. In neither case, could it yield enjoyment to the nation to which the capital belonged, or in any respect support its population.

Some descriptions of commerce, however, furnish wages indirectly by replacing the capital of the manufacturer, while others have no such effect. The merchant who keeps on hand a quantity of the raw material, and the retailer who distributes the finished work to the consumers, en-

able the manufacturer to employ the whole of his stock in maintaining workmen. If those trades were not exercised by others, they must have been carried on by the manufacturer himself; and part of his stock must have been vested, exactly like those of the merchant and retailer, in keeping by him an assortment of the raw material and of the finished goods. In the same manner, inland commerce, by removing an article to the part of the country where it is most in demand, and bringing back some other commodity, replaces the capital of two manufacturers in different parts of the country, enabling each of them to maintain more workmen, than if he had been obliged to send off his goods himself, to exchange them for what was wanted in his neighbourhood, and to wait for his returns.

A foreign merchant, if he export home manufactures, and import foreign commodities, replaces the stock of one manufacturer at home and another abroad; his capital yielding only half of its support to the population of his own country. If he entirely confine himself to the exchange of foreign commodities, and carry on his commerce in foreign vessels, he replaces no national stock whatever, and gives encouragement to no kind of national industry. An English merchant, who, in American vessels, sends tobacco to Spain, and wine to America, contributes in no way, except by his own expenditure, to the subsistence or en-

joyments of any of his countrymen. He may derive great profits from his speculations, and these profits, if expended, may occasion a demand for home manufactures, or, if preserved, increase the national wealth; but the capital itself may be considered as belonging for the time to Spain and America, rather than to England. Were a hundred pounds to be withdrawn from manufacture, and vested in this description of foreign trade, however profitable the adventure might be, the aggregate enjoyments of the country would be diminished by a sum equal to what had formerly furnished subsistence and some gratifications to two or three workmen and their families.

It is an error, therefore, to suppose that the interest of individuals and that of the state are necessarily the same; or, in other words, that the employment of capital which yields the highest profit is, on that account, the most advantageous to the country. It is conceivable, that a nation may be so situate as to be carried into extensive foreign commerce, to the injury of agriculture, and the ruin of her manufactures. A very opulent maritime state, like Holland, surrounded by nations comparatively poor, seems to be in such a situation; and perhaps some legislative interference, to counteract the natural tendency of stock, to withdraw from those employments which are most advantageous to the public, if that in-

terference were consistent with justice, might not, in such circumstances, be impolitic.

But, in general, the distribution of capital, which naturally takes place, is that which is most consonant to the interest of all classes of the inhabitants. To discourage exportation would evidently be to discourage production; and to discourage importation, by which alone the price of the articles exported can be repaid, would produce, though less directly, the same effect. Nor is there much danger in ordinary cases of too great a part of the capital being turned to commerce altogether between foreign countries, while the disadvantages of employing factors, of being imperfectly acquainted with the state of foreign markets, and of being frequently misinformed with regard to the stability of foreign customers, must always operate as a bounty in favour of resident merchants. Had no encouragements been held out by government, it is probable that the stock vested in this most disadvantageous manner would never have exceeded what, from the rapidity of accumulation, or other unavoidable circumstances, could not easily find employment in more beneficial branches of trade. But it has been the mistaken policy of modern Europe to overthrow the natural distribution of capital, and artificially to direct a large proportion of mercantile stock to those speculations, which, affording no revenue to the people,

have no influence, otherwise than by the profits of the merchant, in augmenting national production or wealth.

III. The quickness of the return of capital to its employer is another circumstance, which, though of great importance to the nation, is quite unconnected with profit, according to which alone the relative advantage of different branches of trade is estimated by individuals.

When stock is quickly replaced to its proprietor, it puts in motion a greater quantity of industry, and consequently furnishes the means of subsistence and enjoyment to a greater number of inhabitants, than when it is directed towards speculations, the returns of which, however great at last, are necessarily slow. The manufacturer who employs his hundred pounds, so as again to have it in his possession at the end of six months, can maintain double the number of workmen, that he could have maintained with the same stock returned to him only at the end of the year. His annual profits may not be increased, on the contrary, they will probably be diminished by the competition of a number of small capitals; but in each year a greater quantity of commodities will both be produced and consumed, and a greater amount of the necessaries or comforts of life will be enjoyed by the people. In this view, whatever quickens the return of capital to its

proprietor, may be considered as having increased its amount.

Slowness of returns may proceed from storing up commodities in expectation of a rise of price; from the distance of the place of consumption from that of production; from the indirect nature of the trade; or from the credit allowed by the manufacturer to the dealer, and by him to the consumer. The first cause may occasionally exist in every employment of stock, though in general it is the interest of individuals to dispose of their commodities as quickly as possible. The distance of the market and the circuitous nature of the commerce, render some branches of foreign trade less advantageous to the nation than others, and all of them less beneficial than internal commerce: but the difference in the period of returns is to be chiefly ascribed to the length of credit which prevails in different countries, and in the several kinds of commerce established in each.

In so far as internal consumption alone is concerned, the length of credit is wholly immaterial to the nation. Were it shortened, the returns of the grower or manufacturer of a commodity would undoubtedly be more speedy, but the wholesale merchant would be forced to replace his stock by drawing it more quickly from the retailer, and the retailer from his customer. This customer, if he were himself a farmer, manufac-

turer, or merchant, would be obliged to draw out the price of the article so much the sooner from his own stock in trade; were he a landholder, to levy his rent so much the sooner from his farmer; were he a capitalist, to call up his money from those to whom it was lent, or to draw it from his banker, by whom it was distributed in various ways among farmers, manufacturers, and merchants. There would, thus, be a diminution of stock in one employment exactly equal to its increase in another. Credit is merely a loan to the debtor from the creditor. While this loan is from one inhabitant to another, it alters in no respect the quantity of stock at any time existing in the country; it merely transfers that capital to the person who is willing to pay the highest premium for its use, and therefore, in ordinary cases, directs it to the most profitable employments.

It is otherwise when credit is extended to foreign countries. Here it is also a loan, but it may be considered as a loan from one nation to another, by which the debtor country acquires all the uses of capital belonging to the creditor. For this advantage a full equivalent is, no doubt, paid to the merchant in a higher rate of profit; but no compensation is made for the loss suffered by the nation. If the returns of the capital vested in foreign trade are received every six months, that capital will import and ex-

port as many commodities as four times the amount of stock could accomplish, where the distance of the market, the indirectness of the trade, or the extension of the foreign credit, required two years to wind up the speculation. At four several times the demand will be created in the home market; at four periods the farming or manufacturing stock will be replaced; and at four different times the amount of this stock will have been expended in furnishing subsistence or enjoyments to the people; while in the more distant speculation, or under the disadvantage of a protracted credit to foreign merchants, these operations could only once have taken place.

In this case, it is evident, that the interest of the merchant is not necessarily the same with that of the state. The former endeavours to employ his stock in those speculations which yield him the highest profits, though at a greater distance of time. He prefers thirty per cent. of profit at the end of two years, to five per cent. four times repeated during the same course of time. But the interest of the state is very different, requiring that the capital should be vested in the manner which returns it most frequently to the country; that distant speculations should be discouraged; and, above all, that commerce should be carried on with opulent countries, where the low rate of interest holds out no temptation to an extended credit. Most unwisely, then, has

the general course of commercial regulation been hitherto directed to the encouragement of those distant transactions with countries inclined to pay highly for an extended credit, which, if tolerated, had certainly no farther claims to public favour.

It might be dangerous, as well as unjust, to adopt an opposite system, and to throw obstacles in the way of such speculations, as, though less conducive to the general good, are more advantageous to the merchant. When a country has become richer than her neighbours, and the ordinary profits of stock have consequently declined, it were unjust, and probably vain, to endeavour to confine capital to employments, which, however beneficial to the nation, are no longer the most profitable to private adventurers. It would be to tax one class of inhabitants for the advantage of the rest, to occasion a vexatious interference with the private affairs of the citizens, and ultimately to induce the capitalist to emigrate with his wealth to some other country, where he would be allowed to consult his own interests and to follow his own inclinations. Nor does it seem possible, by bounties, or other direct encouragements, to improve the natural current of mercantile stock. To compensate the deficiency of profits in those employments which it might be desirable to favour, would require a public revenue to an amount much more destructive of pri-

vate enjoyment, and more detrimental to the public welfare, than any distribution of commercial capital, which, independently of the injudicious interference of government, is at all likely to take place.

IV. Some employments of capital, though advantageous, or even essential, to the public welfare, may not be so obviously profitable as to attract sufficient funds from individuals. In such cases, what cannot be done by private combination, if sufficiently important, may properly be undertaken by the state.

Nothing can be more essential to the public welfare than good roads, by which the cultivation of land may be facilitated, and the produce of manufacturing and agricultural industry distributed among the consumers. There is, however, little probability, in a country not fully improved, of the returns being for some time adequate to the expense of constructing commodious roads; and consequently there is no sufficient inducement to vest private capital in a speculation of which the profits must be both distant and precarious. In such circumstances, government is justified in interfering and executing those public works, either by laying a general tax on the country, or by forcing each proprietor to contribute according to the advantage which he is likely to derive from the road. The capital, though changed in its direction, is not lost to its proprietors. If ju-

diciously expended, it will soon produce a revenue, and at any rate it will be amply, though perhaps not immediately, restored to the landholders, by an advance in the rents of their estates.

The transmission of letters is another instance of the necessity of public regulation in what is properly a matter of trade. The business of society can be only imperfectly carried on, if there be difficulty or delay in conveying intelligence in every direction, and receiving communications even from the most sequestered villages. But whatever might take place between considerable towns, it never could be the interest of any person to travel regularly through less frequented parts of the country; and the seeking out a messenger for every particular occasion might be productive of great expense and inconvenient delay. Government, by one general establishment, facilitates the communications of the country more effectually than could be done by partial associations of the inhabitants of the several districts; and, by levying the postage of letters from those who derive advantage from the institution, renders it a source of revenue, rather than of public expense.

The coinage, also, belongs to this branch of public duty.

Without any interference of government, private merchants or bankers, for their own conve-

nience, might affix stamps to the gold and silver which they issued, bearing that each piece was of a particular weight and fineness. By this means a great deal of weighing and assaying would be saved both to themselves and to those who confided in their accuracy. Relying on their probity, the public would consider their stamps as ascertaining the weight and quality of the metal, and thus the money issued by them would circulate wherever their characters were known.

Such a coinage, however, would be inconvenient. Different bankers would fix on different weights and alloys, so that troublesome calculations would be necessary to ascertain the comparative values of the money which they issued; there would be a complete change of currency on passing beyond the bounds within which the respectability of each issuer was known; and some bankers, on pretence that their pieces were worn down by use, might gradually reduce the weight of their money.

It is, therefore, very advantageous, if not absolutely necessary, that government should take this branch of commerce into their own hands; that there should be but one coinage in the kingdom; and that a national, in preference to a private, stamp should be affixed to that money which is to be the common standard of exchangeable value.

The exercise of this duty of government ne-

cessarily creates some expense which may be defrayed, either from the general revenue of the state, or by charging for the stamped money somewhat more than its intrinsic value. There is little injustice in either mode. If taxes are fairly proportioned to the property of the contributors, the expense of coinage, when defrayed from the general revenue, will affect the inhabitants according to their wealth; and the advantages which they respectively derive from the coinage are nearly, if not altogether, in the same proportion. If a seignorage be imposed at the mint, it will be paid by those who have occasion for the money, and in exact proportion to the time in which it remains in their possession. This seignorage, however, ought not to exceed the expense of the mint; otherwise it will encourage private coining, and thence diminish public confidence in the currency of the state.*

There may be other cases in which it is proper for government to give a particular direc-

* The conciseness with which it is necessary to treat this subject made it impossible, had it been desirable, to enter upon the modern, or rather the revived, idea of a currency, of abstract and unchangeable value. Indeed, enough has already been written in refutation of a notion, which although in some measure countenanced by the votes of the House of Commons, never could have been entertained by any one versant in political economy.—See the Earl of Lauderdale's tracts on this subject, and a small pamphlet entitled, "Brief Thoughts on the present State of the Currency of this Country."

tion to part of the national capital; but they are probably not very numerous. In some countries, such interferences have been carried to the most unwarrantable lengths. Many trades, which would have been followed by individuals, to their own advantage and that of the public, have been monopolized by the state, to the loss of the revenue, and the oppression of the inhabitants. It ought never to be forgotten that what can be done by individuals consulting their private interests, is always better and cheaper done than by any public institution; and whenever, from particular circumstances, the interference of government is requisite, it ought to be directed and controuled, in as far as possible, by those who have the most immediate interest in the success of the undertaking.

V. On the most cursory view of improved society, it must be sufficiently apparent that almost all of the comforts enjoyed by the people are the fruits of genius and study. Even what now appears the simplest machine may have occupied many years of patient investigation, and exhibited, at the time of its invention, superior powers of mechanical combination. The discovery, also, of the qualities of animal, vegetable, and mineral substances, which might be the result of accident, could be applied to useful purposes only by accurate experiment and judicious discrimination. To encourage useful discoveries,

as the means of increasing public happiness and wealth, is therefore an important duty of government; and to disseminate them speedily and generally among the people is the only mode in which they can be either rendered extensively useful, or made to undergo successive corrections and improvements, till, by the study of philosophers, and the practical observations of mechanics, they are carried to their utmost perfection.

The property which each man has in the fruits of his own industry and invention is perhaps of all property the most sacred, and every new discovery is directly the result of the time, labour, and thought of its author. Whatever advantages, therefore, may accrue from a new discovery, a new combination, or an improved method, are strictly the property of the inventor; and as it would be unjust to force him to relinquish any part of these advantages, so would this injustice be followed by a discouragement of talent, a concealment of what might be most important to the general welfare, and an imperfection in all processes of the arts.

But without public interference, it never can be for the interest of an inventor to publish his invention. He will rather attempt, by concealment, to secure those high profits which a monopoly might enable him to extort. It is only by some equivalent that he can be prevailed upon to make public the results of his studies

and experiments; and, in many instances, this equivalent may be of such a nature, as to reconcile his interests with those of the nation. By what is called a patent, his monopoly is protected for a certain number of years, on condition, that, in the meantime, every part of the discovery be fully explained, and that, at the expiration of the term, all monopoly shall cease. By this agreement, the inventor is rewarded exactly in proportion to the value of his discovery, a field is instantly opened for farther improvements, and the full advantage to the public is only postponed.

But, occasionally, a discovery may be so important to the general welfare, that the immediate diffusion of its benefits among all ranks of the people, in the cheapest and most effectual manner, is extremely desirable. The discoveries of a salutary medicine, of a process calculated to increase the fertility of land, or of a machine adapted to render the rude produce more easily applicable to human necessities, are all of this nature. Were it left to each individual to make an agreement for the privilege of using the discovery, many might be deterred by an expense which could have no bounds, but the interest, or perhaps the caprice, of the inventor; more would neglect to purchase, what, from want of direct experience, they could not justly appreciate; and others, trusting to their obscurity, might at-

tempt to acquire by fraud, that of which they were unwilling to pay the price. No penalty could effectually protect a patent for vaccination, for an improved plough, or a superior kind of spinning wheel. The exclusive property of the invention might, however, occasion many law-suits, retard the diffusion of the discovery among the people, and enable an avaricious or conceited inventor to counteract the most important wishes and interests of the nation.

In such cases, government is justified in doing that which could scarcely be accomplished by any association of individuals; in making it the interest of the inventor to publish his discovery; in applying part of the wealth of the nation to a purpose to which, however likely it may be to yield an accession of happiness to the great body of the people, it would not have gone of its own accord; and even perhaps in preventing the caprice or inordinate selfishness of the inventor from standing in the way of the public good.

It may scarcely be necessary to add, that such interferences should rarely be resorted to. They expose the nation to impositions from plausible, but unsound, projectors, and ought always to be refused, either when the public advantage is doubtful, or when it is unimportant, or when, from the nature of the discovery, the reward can safely be left, by means of a patent, to those

classes of the inhabitants by whom it will be voluntarily paid.

VI. At the commencement of a new branch of trade or manufacture, there are discouragements which disappear after its establishment. The original outlay may be so great, that, notwithstanding a high probability of distant profit, individuals may be unwilling to expose their property to such a risk; some subsidiary trade may not be brought to perfection from want of previous encouragement; or so strong a prejudice may exist in the minds of the consumers, that the manufacture may, for some time, be denied a fair competition. The trade may be well adapted to the circumstances of the country, and calculated, after its first difficulties are overcome, to employ a number of workmen, and yield an adequate profit on the requisite stock. But this would be no compensation to the first adventurers, who, in struggling with those difficulties, might be entirely ruined.

It may therefore be thought not unreasonable for government to hold out some encouragement, either by bounty or protecting duties, to counteract the disadvantages of a new establishment; to allure capital by a temporary premium, to encourage the subsidiary arts by a public reward, or to correct the national prejudice by the exclusion for a time of rival manufactures.

All these interferences are, however, extremely dangerous. They are liable to be abused by projectors for the purpose of building their own consequence or prosperity on the ruin of those who are duped by their magnificent promises: they are apt to be made subservient to the interests of a few, who, at the expense of the rest of the inhabitants, are enabled to dispose of inferior articles at an extravagant price: and, unless guided by most accurate knowledge and the utmost caution, they allure capital, to what are, in reality, unprofitable employments, withdrawing it from more advantageous branches of trade, and therefore diminishing that national production, which it is their only purpose to increase. If such encouragements are to be granted at all, they ought to be for a short and specified period; after which, if the trade cannot support itself, we may be assured that it is not adapted to the circumstances of the country. But when once established, though professedly for a short period, it is difficult for government to withdraw those premiums and prohibitions, the continuance of which will be represented by those chiefly interested, and believed to be best informed, as necessary to the support of a lucrative trade, to the preservation of a large amount of national capital, and to the protection of a multitude of individuals from impending ruin.

It is probably safer, then, to leave every branch of trade to struggle with its own difficulties. Those which are well adapted to the state of the country will infallibly, though perhaps more slowly, establish themselves on the firm basis of the private interests of the inhabitants; and if a few should be strangled in their birth, enough will grow up to maturity, to give full employment for all the capital and industry of the nation.

VII. A manufacturing nation frequently finds it advantageous to import a great part of the raw material on which its population and capital are employed. This arrangement may be profitable during peace, by enabling the manufactured article to be brought to market cheaper than it could be afforded from home produce; but it must be attended with considerable danger and embarrassment in time of war. On the commencement of hostilities, all direct communication with the country from which the raw material is drawn, may be entirely cut off, and the rude produce may be too bulky, or the risk of capture too great, to allow it to be transported, in a circuitous manner, at a high insurance and advanced freight. In such circumstances, a manufacture, in which extensive machinery and a number of workmen were regularly employed, may suddenly be stopped. There may be experienced for some time a total want

of materials, or, more permanently, such a rise in their price as the commodity cannot bear. The circulating capital engaged in the manufacture will, no doubt, find other employments, though at some inconvenience; but the workmen will be exposed to the greatest hardships, and the fixed capital, which at any rate will be rendered for a time unproductive, if it be of a perishable nature, or if the war continue so long as to establish the manufacture in another country, may be entirely lost.

The only mode of guarding against these evils, and, if the manufacture be very important, of preventing the apprehension of them from exerting an injurious control over the foreign policy of the state, is to cultivate the raw material at home. This, however, will not always be effected by the private interests of individuals. From many circumstances of climate or soil, the farmers may not be able to furnish the article as cheap as it can be imported, and during peace the manufacturers, uninfluenced by views of general policy, will purchase it in the most favourable market. To them it will be no consideration, that, unless the culture of the raw material be encouraged, a time may come when great loss will be sustained by individuals and the nation. Such extended views more properly belong to government, whose duty it is to do that for the general advantage of the state, which cannot be accomplished by indi-

viduals. By bounties on production, encouragement may be given to the particular culture which the state of the manufacture demands, and it remains only to be ascertained, whether the taxes requisite for this purpose are likely to be compensated by the general safety and independence which they insure.

That this may be the case, it would seem requisite that the culture should be so far adapted to the climate and soil as to require but a moderate bounty; that the raw material should be raised in so few countries that there exists a probability of the nation being at some period engaged in hostilities with them all; that it should be so bulky as not to bear the charges of a circuitous importation; and, lastly, that the manufacture should be so extensive that even its temporary stoppage would create very general misery, or at least occasion considerable embarrassment and loss.

Were these cautions strictly attended to, it is probable that the cases, in which bounties were granted on the production of the raw materials of manufacture, would not be very numerous. The linen trade of Ireland, perhaps, employs so great a part of the population, as to justify some encouragement, in that country, to the raising of flax; and the necessity of procuring wool of a quality at present to be found only in Spain, for the manufacture of superfine broad cloth, would

be a sufficient reason for even a high premium on the improvement of the breed of sheep, if it were ascertained that, by such means, the fleeces of England could be brought to an equality, or nearly to an equality, with those of Spain.

VIII. It may be good policy in the state to encourage branches of trade or manufacture which contribute directly to national defence. This object being paramount to all others, no expense or disadvantage, necessary to its attainment, can be considered as improperly incurred. Should there be danger of the supply of warlike stores being cut off, or even restricted, by the hostile regulations of foreign states, it would be prudent to provide against such an event, by the establishment of the necessary manufactures at home; and the cost, in whatever manner it may be defrayed, of rendering the nation independent in her means of defence, can be considered as improper, only when it is extravagant in comparison with the protection which it affords.

Such manufactures may either be carried on by government, or by private adventurers allured by public encouragement. The first mode will always be the most expensive; for the same economy is not to be expected in public institutions, as in private manufactures conducted under the eye of him who is to profit by every improvement of the process, and every saving of the expense. Nor is it likely that the quality of the

articles will be better, than might be procured by proportioning the encouragement to the extent and excellence of the work. The same, or probably a much smaller, expenditure, than is wasted in great and ill-conducted establishments, would, under judicious management, stimulate the exertions of private adventurers, and secure at all times a full supply of equal or superior articles.

There are two ways in which private manufactures necessary to the public safety may be encouraged by the state; the one, by direct bounties; the other, by duties or prohibitions on the importation of rival commodities. In the former case, the expense is paid from the general revenues of the state; in the latter, from the private incomes of those individuals by whom the commodities are purchased. Bounties, therefore, are more just than protecting duties, defence being an object in which all the inhabitants are interested: and they are also more expedient. They can be proportioned both to the quantity and to the quality of the article produced, and government, knowing the exact amount of the bounty, can judge with perfect accuracy whether an equivalent advantage is procured. In monopolies, on the other hand, the same encouragement is given to ill-manufactured, as to the highest-finished, articles, and the expense of encouragement, forming part of the price, can never be ascertained, so as to be

stated accurately against the means of protection which are secured. It is probably this last circumstance, however, which has occasioned the preference of a system of protecting duties and prohibitions, by which, the real burden imposed upon the country being concealed, interested dealers have found it easier to impose upon government and the nation.

In England, the navy being justly considered as the best means of defence, the attention of the legislature has been directed to whatever could insure a supply of naval stores, and, above all, to those measures by which the number of native sailors might be increased. To keep a large fleet in constant service during peace, for the instruction of the sailors, would be attended with an enormous expense. But the same object may be attained, if the capital of the nation can be turned to foreign trade carried on by English seamen. To secure these objects, the Navigation Act, originally framed in hostility to the Dutch, has been carefully guarded from violation, being very generally represented as the great source of our commercial prosperity and naval power. Whether it has been attended with all the benefits usually ascribed to it, there may, however, be reason to doubt.*

* For a short and perspicuous account of the Navigation Act, see the Wealth of Nations, Book IV. Chap. II.

If the Act of Navigation has had any considerable effect in raising up the commercial navy of Britain, it must have done so by directing to the shipping trade a greater part of the national capital, than would have gone to it of its own accord. This it can have accomplished only by raising the rate of freights. But every increase of the charges of transportation must levy an indirect tax on all the consumers of imported commodities, and reduce the profits on all goods manufactured for exportation. The competition in the foreign market will prevent any part of the additional freight from falling either on foreign producers or consumers; and though the general rate of profit at home must ultimately extend over every particular branch of manufacture, some of those which might otherwise have been advantageous will be abandoned, others restricted, and the average profit somewhat reduced in all. It would be proper, therefore, to enquire, in the first place, into the price which is paid for this protection, in the advance of all foreign commodities, and the general reduction of the profits of stock.

The increase of shipping, it is also probable, must have directed a greater portion of capital to foreign and distant commerce, than would otherwise have gone to that employment. British ships built for direct importation might, no doubt, be occasionally chartered by foreign mer-

chants, who were desirous of sending their commodities to Britain; although these merchants will usually prefer ships of their own country, with the condition and stowage of which they are better acquainted. When the demand, therefore, from accidental circumstances, declines, the owners, rather than lay up their vessels, or accept of an inadequate freight, will be tempted to become merchants, to import or export some commodities on which they hope to make a moderate profit, or to become carriers, on their own account, between two foreign nations. Thus the trade of ship-owner naturally leads to that of merchant, and whatever allures capital to the one will ultimately direct it to the other. But it has already been shown, that foreign trade is less advantageous than agriculture, manufactures, or internal commerce; that the more distant the foreign country and the slower the returns, the less beneficial it is to the nation; and that, when it consists in exchanging commodities between foreign states, the capital employed in carrying it on must be considered as for a time lost to the country. In so far, therefore, as the Navigation Act has had a tendency to direct additional capital to such employments, it must have diminished the annual revenues of the people, and consequently retarded the progress of national wealth.

It is probable, however, that in this respect the Act of Navigation has been much more innocent than its panegyrists would wish us to believe.

The provisions by which it was intended to secure the coasting trade to British seamen and ships, must have been entirely nugatory. A British ship-owner has so many advantages in building, repairing, manning, and victualling his vessel, under his own direction, that no competition of foreigners in this branch could at all be apprehended. Nor is there the least possibility that an English shipmaster, sailing from one port of England to another, should prefer, to his own countrymen, sailors allured from foreign states, with whose language he is unacquainted, whose habits are in many respects different from his own, and for whose good behaviour he has not the security arising from attention to character and to the esteem of their friends. Few instances can be adduced of a coasting or inland trade being carried on by foreigners, and none where the nation is more opulent than those by which she is surrounded.

Neither is there much reason to believe that more capital has been allured into distant mercantile speculations, or that more English ships are employed in the carrying trade in consequence of our public regulations. Such commerce is fitted only for opulent countries in which

large capitals are accumulated, and where profits have been lowered by an active competition in every branch of business. Next to Holland, England, of all the nations of Europe, is most remarkably in these circumstances; and therefore we may conclude, with certainty, that though her navigation laws had never existed, her share of foreign commerce must have been very large. If a few particular branches may be pointed out, in which, without protecting duties and monopolies, she might have been undersold, they will be found of little importance in the scale of her agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial employments.

But in exact proportion to the innocence of the Navigation Act, must have been its inefficacy in raising up the commercial and military navies of Great Britain. It is the home trade, in which we had no competition to fear, that employs the great body of our seamen, exercises them in rough and stormy seas, and furnishes them expeditiously for the public service. In comparison with the home trade, all our foreign commerce is, in this point of view, of very inferior importance. Of that foreign commerce, however, the extent of our capital must in all circumstances have secured us a very ample share, and the few branches that may have been opened up by public regulations will be found to employ no great number of sailors, to require such long voyages, that even that number cannot in an exi-

gency be available for the service of the state, and, in some instances, to be attended with such mortality, that they may be looked upon as a grave, rather than as a nursery, for seamen.

When we survey, then, the various circumstances by which the interests of individuals may be rendered opposite to, or separate from, those of the public, we must acknowledge that, in very few instances, are those interests so distinct as they may at first appear; that in still fewer are they directly incompatible with each other; and that the government, which fully protects private property, and, by the diffusion of liberty, invigorates the minds of the people, has done almost every thing, for the national opulence, which human wisdom can effect.

There is one great branch, however, of the business of society, the Providing of the Means of Subsistence for the People, which, both from its importance, and from the opposite views that have been entertained of the regulations applicable to it, may require to be more minutely examined. This has, accordingly, been reserved as the subject of a separate section.

SECTION V.

Of Bounties on the Importation and Exportation of Corn.

There is perhaps no commodity of which the price is so much exposed to fluctuations from year to year, as corn, or of which the fluctuations in price are attended with so many evils.

The quantity of other articles brought to market, depending almost entirely on the capital employed in their production, can be suited with tolerable accuracy to the demand. If too little be exposed for sale this year, the high profit will ensure a full supply the next; if too much be brought forward, part of the stock employed in their production or importation will quickly be directed to more profitable speculations. The demand, likewise, in a great measure, suits itself to the actual supply. If too little muslin be manufactured, the price will rise, other dresses will in part be substituted, and many of the consumers will defer their purchases till the price decline: on the contrary, should too much be made, the fall of price will increase the number of purchasers and the consumpt of each.

In neither of these ways, can the supply and demand for corn be easily accommodated to each other. The quantity of grain, though in a course

of time it may be regulated by the demand, depends also on the seasons. If enough be raised in an ordinary year, there must be an overplus in a very genial season, and a deficiency in one that is unproductive. The supply is not dependent on the quantity of agricultural capital alone, but also on many fortuitous circumstances. Nor does the demand so readily, as in other instances, adapt itself to the supply. The number of consumers is the same in the scarcest and in the most plentiful season; and many of them are so opulent, that a rise or fall in the price of corn neither forces them to retrench, nor tempts them to enlarge, the use of that article of food. In cheap years, a little more corn may be consumed by the poor, but the greatest part of what is saved in the price of grain will be expended on comforts or luxuries of a different kind. In like manner, in scarce years, the poorest of the people will be forced to greater economy in the use of corn; but those, who are at all above absolute want, will deprive themselves of many comforts, rather than alter the nature or quantity of their food. A small deficiency or excess of crop will, accordingly, raise or lower the price much more than a similar variation in the quantity would affect the value of any other commodity.

Great fluctuations in profits are always detrimental, by deranging the steadiness of that income, according to which expenditure ought to

be regulated. The evil of such fluctuations, however, is in general confined to those actually engaged in the trade; or, if it extend farther, it is only indirectly, by diminishing the aggregate amount of the national wealth: but sudden alterations in the price of corn, not thus limited in their consequences, are very adverse to the welfare of all the labouring class.

Whatever may be the effect on the rate of wages resulting from a permanent rise or fall in the price of grain, temporary fluctuations add to the wealth of the workman, while he is comparatively rich, and aggravate his misery at the time he is poor. When the price of corn suddenly advances, a great proportion of the people retrench their superfluities in preference to restricting their accustomed food. A considerable defalcation in the demand of labour, beginning with the workmen employed in the production of the superfluities of the poor, but extending itself to other branches of industry, is the immediate consequence. While the demand for labour is thus reduced, the quantity at market is, from the same circumstances, rapidly augmented. Those who were idle are now forced to work, while the industrious, in the hope of earning better wages, and escaping threatened privations, are induced to employ in labour the little time which they formerly dedicated to healthful recreations, or even part of what was devoted to sleep. Thus, as the means

of subsistence rise in price, the quantity of labour increases, and the demand for it falls off; thus, as the real value of wages is reduced, the nominal price of labour also declines, till at last the workman, half fed and worn down with excessive toil, loses his health, on which the maintenance of his family depends.

When the price of corn is extremely low, every thing is reversed. The great body of the people, having a surplus after purchasing their usual food and clothes, indulge in the use of some additional luxury produced by human industry; and while the demand for labour is thus increased, the quantity at market is considerably diminished. The profligate, without danger of being starved, can devote more of their time to idleness; and even the industrious find that, without involving their families in distress, they can afford some relaxation from their ordinary industry. The rate of wages accordingly advances, in proportion as the wages are less requisite for the mere subsistence of the workman. The consequences, though not so immediately distressing as those of a scarcity, are perhaps not less pernicious. Some labourers may take advantage of the juncture to commence a little accumulation, by which they may be protected from future want, or gradually advanced to a higher station in society; but much the greater number, enjoying the present ease, and unmindful of futu-

rity, acquire a taste for luxuries which they cannot afterwards procure, or contract idle habits which they cannot afterwards correct. When their temporary prosperity is at an end, they are poorer; for they have more wants. Unable to retrench, they sink into debt, and at last, losing all hope of retrieving their affairs, they give themselves up to vice, and abandon their families to beggary.

If this be a true picture of the consequences of great and rapid fluctuations in the price of grain, it can scarcely be denied that it is the duty of government, by every just and practicable means, to obviate such evils. But it has been thought that, in this case, as in most others, every desirable object may be attained by a perfect freedom of trade. Corn, like all other commodities, would of itself seek the best market; it would speedily leave those countries where it was in excess, to supply such as suffered from deficiency; a general equalization of price all over the world would ensue, and the plenty of one country compensating the wants of another, no considerable fluctuation of price could take place, unless the same abundance or scarcity extend over the greater part of the globe.

Whatever truth there may be in this representation, it supposes so general an overthrow of the policy which has hitherto been adopted even by enlightened nations, so much liberality in popular

opinions, or so much firmness in maintaining perfect freedom of exportation in unfavourable seasons, and in defiance of the clamours of the people, that it must be considered as a project, which, however specious in appearance, cannot be reduced to practice. To be at all efficient, freedom of commerce must be generally adopted and steadily maintained. But while many nations in years of plenty shut their ports against your superabundant crops, and in years of scarcity refuse to supply your wants, you must follow and counteract their policy, by holding out encouragement to exportation in the one case, and to importation in the other.

Even if the whole world should concur in establishing a free corn trade, an event which the most sanguine can hardly expect, this of itself would not do all that might be accomplished by judicious regulations. The same weather which has produced a scanty crop in one country will usually have occasioned a similar scarcity in the surrounding nations. The supply must, therefore, be brought from a distance, loaded with heavy charges. In like manner, no relief could be procured by exportation, unless the countries in the immediate neighbourhood had experienced a very opposite season, or so great a dearth should happen in some distant part of the world, as might cover the expenses of a long navigation. But corn being both a bulky commodity, and one

which is apt to be damaged at sea, the charges of transportation to any considerable distance must necessarily be great; and therefore, between the most plentiful and the scarcest years, there would still exist a very material difference of price.

By a well-regulated bounty, a part, or the whole, of those charges of carriage might be paid by the state, in place of the consumer. Importation would then commence as soon as the difference of price and the bounty together covered the expense of conveying grain from the nearest place where it was in greater plenty; and when the lowness of the price began to discourage the farmer, and to injure the industrious habits of the people, the opposite bounty would make it the interest of merchants immediately to export the surplus.

The public expense thus occasioned would be amply repaid by the advantages resulting from a more complete equalization of the price of corn; for, independently of the duty of government to promote virtue, economy, and industry, it is probable that nearly a full equivalent for the taxes, by which such bounties were defrayed, would be derived, in the course of time, from the diminution of the annual demands on the public funds, or on private charity, for the maintenance of the poor.

But the adoption or rejection of interference with the corn trade scarcely seems to be a matter of choice. Whatever may be done with regard to bounties on exportation, it is impossible for the legislature effectually to abolish those on importation. Few governments, however despotical, would venture to inflame the rage of a people suffering under scarcity, and apprehensive of famine, by obstinately refusing all encouragement to an increased supply of corn. No conviction of the ultimate advantages of free trade could, for a moment, withstand the sufferings of the people, the entreaties and remonstrances of the humane in all ranks of life, and the apprehensions of popular insurrection. If government could be so firm in the conscious rectitude of their principles, as to set at nought all these powerful motives, voluntary associations of the richer citizens would soon supply what they, in common with their countrymen, would consider as a dereliction of duty in the state. Subscriptions would be entered into for the purpose of giving premiums upon importation, or perhaps of purchasing corn in foreign countries, not, like other merchants, in hopes of profit, but with the humane intention of alleviating the sufferings of the poor. Government surely could not be expected to attack the right of property, according to which every one is entitled to employ his wealth in the manner he thinks fit, in order to

withstand a purpose so disinterested and popular; and the farmers would thus be exposed to a competition much more injurious, than that of regular merchants encouraged by a moderate bounty from the state.

If, then, from its own nature, the corn trade cannot at all times be left to its free course, justice requires that the unavoidable reduction of the farmer's profits in times of scarcity should be compensated by an equal relief in years of uncommon plenty. It is only by a well-regulated system of this kind, that these profits, and consequently the rent of the landholder, can be restored to that condition in which they would have stood, had there been no interference of any kind with the state of the market; and therefore the most decided advocate for a free trade can scarcely object to what is calculated merely to correct a deviation from perfect equality in the encouragements held out to the several employments of stock. Nor does it seem difficult to frame regulations fitted to produce this salutary effect. Having ascertained the average price of corn, all that is necessary is, to construct two scales of bounty, on importation and exportation, beginning at an equal distance from that average rate, and increasing as the price advanced on the one hand, or declined on the other.

But in a country not fully improved, particularly if the average crop be insufficient for the

subsistence of the inhabitants, it may be expedient to proceed a step farther, and, by fixing the points for the commencement of the opposite bounties at unequal distances from the average price, to hold out a more positive encouragement to agriculture. If the bounty on importation begins at ten shillings above the average price, perhaps that on exportation should commence when corn fell five shillings a quarter below it.

If any branch of the business of society be deserving of public encouragement, it is that of the agriculturist. Over a great part of the world, the land itself in its natural state is almost unproductive; but by the operations of farming, it is gradually improved, so as to become by far the most important part of the fixed capital of the nation. These improvements are either effected by the proprietor, who turns circulating capital, from its former employments, to the draining, enclosing, and manuring of his land; or they take place in the ordinary operations of agriculture, while the farmer is intent only on immediate profit. To raise the value of the produce is evidently to encourage both kinds of improvement. It is to hold out the prospect of greater returns both immediate and remote; to make it the interest of the proprietor to vest a greater portion of circulating capital in his lands, and of the farmer to adopt a more complete system of cultivation, in expectation of the expense being re-

paid by the value of the additional crop. In so far as more circulating capital is vested in land, there is no addition to the general wealth, except this new employment be more productive than the old; but the gradual ameliorations of the farmer may be considered, in one light, as a new creation; for his stock must from year to year have yielded him the ordinary rate of profit, while an addition was imperceptibly made to the permanent value of the farm.

The amount of the bounty, indeed, by which this additional value has been procured, is a charge against the rest of the inhabitants; but the expense will not be very great, and in the course of a short time it is likely to be repaid in the reduction of the ordinary price of grain. When lands are once improved, it never can be the interest of farmers to adopt a less beneficial style of culture, or of proprietors to allow their estates to run waste. By successive ameliorations, therefore, the quantity of improved land, and still more the quantity of corn raised on the same land, may increase so rapidly as to outstrip the home-demand. The bounty on exportation will prevent the price from being too far reduced by a glutted market; but in ordinary years, more will be produced than is consumed in the country, and while every risk of scarcity is thus precluded, the price at home will be more uniformly low. It is thus, that the same measures, which

at one time raise the price, may in other circumstances lower it; and that what has been represented as a contradiction in the several advantages predicted from a bounty on the exportation of corn, may be shown to be its probable result.

In other views, agriculture seems entitled to some encouragement from the state. In proportion to the capital which it requires, it probably furnishes more employment to the people, and adds more to the comforts enjoyed by the inhabitants, to the amount of the population, and to general happiness, than either manufactures or trade. The stock of the farmer is in a great measure employed in paying wages and furnishing subsistence to labourers; the wages of country labour are much less exposed to fluctuations productive of wretchedness and vice; the nature of country employments is conducive to health; and the detached residence of farmers and labourers is highly favourable to sobriety, to family attachment, and to every virtuous habit. A slight expense, by which objects so important may be more fully secured, cannot surely be considered as unrepaid.

Farther equivalents, however, will be found in the exemption of the people from periodical misery, and of the state from dependence on the policy of foreign nations.

A nation, whose agriculture does not furnish subsistence for her inhabitants, must occasionally

be exposed to scarcity, if not to famine. In unfavourable seasons, those countries to which she was accustomed to look for her supplies, influenced by the natural wish of securing plenty at home, by unfounded popular alarms, or by the ignorance, weakness, or caprice, of their rulers, may refuse to relieve her wants. Much time must be lost in establishing new correspondences, additional charges of transportation must be incurred, and while any apprehension remains of the supply being inadequate, prices in the home market must be exorbitantly raised. Were agriculture, in ordinary years, to furnish a surplus for exportation, prices might still somewhat advance; but those alarms of famine, which occasion much solicitude to government, and extreme misery to the people, could scarcely be excited.

Nor can a nation, drawing a considerable part of her annual subsistence from abroad, be independent in her policy. At particular junctures, she must submit to almost every degradation from those by whom she is fed; and, at all times, she goes to war, at the risk of having her supplies cut off by the intrigues or superior arms of her enemies. It is not long since England, from her inability to maintain her inhabitants, felt herself in a most critical situation. During a year of great scarcity, the countries from which she expected her supplies joined in a league to invade what, whether justly or not, she considered as

her maritime rights; and unless she had been freed from her perils by the sudden and opportune death of the emperor of Russia,* she might have been forced to relinquish her empire of the seas, or to have vindicated it at the expense of every species of internal distress.

No way of guarding against occasional scarcity is more economical, or equally efficacious, with bounties on exportation. To store up grain in plentiful years, for the supply of those which are less productive, is to expose it to damage, and, if stored by the nation, to incur the heavy charges inseparable from the mismanagement of great public undertakings. To give a bounty on production would be to glut the market in ordinary years, and, by reducing the average price, to load the revenue with an expense, not for the benefit of the grower, but of the consumer. Something may be done by encouraging distillation in favourable seasons, and prohibiting it during scarcity; but, while this is inadequate to the end in view, and occasions expense either to the public by a bounty on distillation, or to the consumers of spirits by creating a monopoly, it sets the interests of the farmers and landholders, whenever a restriction is proposed, in direct opposition to those of the other inhabitants, and subjects the most important branch of national industry to the

* In March 1801.

control, not of general regulations, but of the fluctuating views of administration.

A bounty on exportation, or some similar encouragement of agriculture, is, at the same time, not less just than expedient. There is scarcely a country in Europe, in which other branches of industry and many descriptions of foreign trade are not aided by bounties and monopolies. The proprietor of lands is forced to pay taxes, either directly, or in the advanced price of the articles he consumes, for the encouragement of various descriptions of manufacture and commerce. To remove all these partialities is an arduous, perhaps an impossible, task. Expensive machinery has been erected, men have been educated to particular trades, and the various branches of business are so interwoven with each other, that to abandon one might be to ruin many. In such circumstances, a general revision of the commercial code, for the purpose of abolishing every preference, might be hazardous and perhaps unjust. But a bounty on the exportation of corn would be some compensation to the landholder for the numerous taxes heaped upon him by legislative interference with the freedom of trade. Being always taxed for the benefit of others, when he is a buyer, it seems not unreasonable to tax others for his benefit, when, changing his character, he goes into the market as a seller.

It has, however, been maintained that this compensation to the landholder is merely delusive; that the wages of labour are entirely dependent on the price of corn; that whatever raises the latter, must also enhance the former, and through it increase the price of all articles produced by human labour; that the landholder will therefore be obliged to refund, in the additional price of every thing which he consumes, the full amount of what he expected to have gained by the advanced price of the corn which he sold.

"The real effect of the bounty," says Dr Smith, "is not so much to raise the real value of corn, "as to degrade the real value of silver; or to "make an equal quantity of it exchange for a "smaller quantity, not only of corn, but of all "other home-made commodities. For the mo-"ney-price of the corn regulates that of all other "home-made commodities.

"It regulates the money-price of labour, which "must always be such as to enable the labourer "to purchase a quantity of corn sufficient to "maintain him and his family, either in the libe-"ral, moderate, or scanty manner in which the "advancing, stationary, or declining circumstan-"ces of the society oblige his employers to main-"tain him.

"It regulates the money-price of all the other "parts of the rude produce of the land, which, "in every period of improvement, must bear a

" certain proportion to that of corn, though " this proportion is different in different periods. " It regulates, for example, the money-price of " grass and hay, of butchers meat, of horses, and " the maintenance of horses, of land-carriage " consequently, or of the greater part of the in- " land commerce of the country.

" By regulating the money-price of all the " other parts of the rude produce of land, it re- " gulates that of the materials of almost all ma- " nufactures. By regulating the money-price of " labour, it regulates that of manufacturing art " and industry. And by regulating both, it re- " gulates that of the complete manufacture. The " money-price of labour, and of every thing that " is the produce either of land or labour, must ne- " cessarily either rise or fall in proportion to the " money-price of corn.

" Though in consequence of the bounty, there- " fore, the farmer should be enabled to sell his " corn for four shillings the bushel, instead of " three and sixpence, and to pay his landlord a " money-rent proportionable to this rise in the " money-price of his produce, yet if, in conse- " quence of this rise in the price of corn, four " shillings will purchase no more home-made " goods of any other kind than three and six- " pence would have done before, neither the cir- " cumstances of the farmer, nor those of the land- " lord, will be much mended by this change. The

" farmer will not be able to cultivate much bet-
" ter; the landlord will not be able to live much
" better. In the purchase of foreign commodi-
" ties this enhancement in the price of corn may
" give them some little advantage. In that of
" home-made commodities it can give them none
" at all. And almost the whole expense of the
" farmer, and the far greater part even of that of
" the landlord, is in home-made commodities."*

Although the justice of this theory were admitted, it would still be expedient to grant bounties with a view to equalize the price of corn, as well as to encourage agriculture. Each farmer and landlord would be enriched by these bounties, in proportion to the fertility and improvement of the farm; while the corresponding loss which he might suffer by the rise of home-made goods, would depend altogether on the style in which he chose to live. Whether this style were expensive or frugal, each of them would find it for his interest to increase the quantity of grain produced from his land.

It is admitted, too, that the landlord would derive, not only an apparent, but a real, advantage in his purchase of foreign commodities, the price of which could not be affected by any rise in the wages of labour at home; and if his dress, his furniture, his food, and those of his domestics,

* Wealth of Nations, Book IV. Chap. V.

be examined, it will be found, that the productions of other countries form no inconsiderable part of his annual expenditure. That this is the case we may be farther satisfied, by considering that all other incomes are expended on home-productions, in the same, or perhaps a greater, proportion, than that of the landholder, who, having, for the most part, a larger revenue, and making use of little more of the plainer articles of dress and food, indulges to a greater degree in foreign luxuries. The landholders confessedly enjoy the whole advantage arising from the enhancement of the price of corn, and they pay only their proportion, along with capitalists, manufacturers, and merchants, of the advanced price of commodities occasioned by that enhancement. The landed proprietors, in demanding bounties on the exportation of corn, have not therefore been so ignorant of their own interests as Dr Smith conceives.

It seems to have escaped the observation of this elegant and profound author, that the opinion which has just been quoted, would lead, by no very remote steps, to the establishment of those doctrines of the French economists, which, in another part of his work, he has endeavoured to overthrow. The rate of profit is equally dependent, with the rate of wages, on the increasing or declining state of the wealth of the society;* and

* Wealth of Nations, Book I. Chap. IX.

the amount of profit, equally with that of wages, consists not in the money received, but in the quantity and quality of the commodities which that money will purchase. If the rise of corn, which is the principal article purchased by the wages of labour, necessarily raises these wages till the workman is enabled to live in that manner which the circumstances of the society would otherwise have placed within his reach, so must the consequent rise on all home-made commodities, on which profits are chiefly expended, enhance the rate of those profits, till the manufacturer or merchant is also enabled to draw that real return for the employment of his capital, which has been allotted to him by the circumstances of the society. Every rise or fall in articles of subsistence, comfort, or luxury, will therefore make a nominal, not a real, change, in the income arising whether from labour or stock; and if this be admitted, it does not seem possible to deny that all taxes, in whatever way they may be levied, must ultimately fall on the only other source of revenue or wealth, the rent of land.*

* It is probably to this opinion, and the corresponding one relative to the effect of taxes on the necessaries of life, to be afterwards considered, that M. Condorcet alludes in the following note in his Life of Turgot. Having stated in the text, that every impost must fall either on the nett revenue of land, or on the nett interest of capital, that is, the portion of interest

The opinion, however, is altogether erroneous. Wages of labour, like the price of every commodity, are entirely regulated by the quantity at market compared to the demand. It is, indeed, only by varying the one of these more rapidly than the other, by increasing or diminishing the demand for labour more quickly than the supply, that the advancing or declining state of society at all affects the rate of wages. When the demand increases without a proportional increase of population, wages necessarily advance; when the demand decreases, they decline: or, on the other hand, when population increases faster than the demand, wages fall; when it decreases without a correspondent diminution of wealth, they necessarily rise. No other circumstance whatever, no consideration of the comfort of the workman, or of the manner, whether liberal, moderate, or scanty, in which he can maintain his family, has the slightest effect on his remuneration. In estimating the effect of a rise in the price of corn on the rate of wages, we have therefore to consider only, whether it has a tendency to increase the demand for labour on the one

which remains after compensating the risk and trouble, which portion he seems to consider as a fixed quantity, he adds in a note, "On peut en voir la preuve dans l'ouvrage de M. Smith. "Nous le citons d'autant plus volontiers, qu'il rejette l'opi- "nion que nous adoptons ici, quoique elle soit une consequence "des principes etablis dans son ouvrage."

hand, or to decrease the number of labourers on the other.

That it could not occasion any new demand for labour is obvious; for whatever it added to the wealth of the landholder, it must deduct from the incomes of the rest of the inhabitants. The country gentleman, whose rental was increased, might indulge in some additional luxuries prepared by human labour: but others, having more to pay for their food, would be forced to retrench in some articles, also produced by the labour of man; and thus the increase of demand from one class would be balanced by a falling off in the demand from others. The advanced price, making no addition to the aggregate wealth of the nation, but only varying, in some degree, its distribution among the several inhabitants, could make no difference in the total expenditure of the society, or consequently in the demand for labour.*

Neither could a rise in the price of corn diminish the number of labourers, or the quantity of work performed by each. A temporary scarcity, it has already been shewn, has an effect

* If the rise of the price of corn were in any manner to affect the demand for labour, it must tend to diminish rather than increase it; for landholders expend a greater proportion of their incomes on foreign commodities, than those classes of the people that would be impoverished by the high price of provisions.

directly contrary, increasing the quantity of labour at market, exactly in proportion to the failure of demand. A permanent rise would not probably be attended with the same consequences. Every workman would gradually reconcile himself to privations which he could not avoid, and, after a short and unavailing struggle, reduce his hours of work to their former number, and retrench those superfluities which were least important to his happiness. He would not long continue his extraordinary exertions in the hopes of still being able to provide all the comforts to which he was accustomed; but far less would he be disposed to relax his industry, at the very time that it had become more necessary for the subsistence of his family. Imperceptibly if the rise in corn were gradual, and with more circumstances of distress if it were sudden and permanent, would he suit his expenditure to the change that had taken place in the value of his income. There are few, if any, countries, where such retrenchments may not be practised without depopulation; there being few countries in which the wages of labour do not exceed the price of the bare necessaries of life. Wages being very different in different employments, it is obvious that the whole workmen might be reduced to the lowest of these conditions, not indeed without occasioning great misery, but without the destruction of life. In like manner, labourers live

more frugally in Scotland than in England, and still more parsimoniously in Ireland; yet in the last of these countries, they contrive both to prolong their own existence, and to rear large families of healthy children. The privations, therefore, to which the people could submit, without direct depopulation, very much surpass those to which they might be subjected by any reasonable bounty on the exportation of grain. Even if this rise in years of plenty were not to be counterbalanced by proportional depression of price in years of scarcity, it would affect the people only at the time when they could most easily bear it; when the plentiful crop, in spite of the bounty, kept the price of corn below its average rate. It therefore could have no tendency whatever to depopulate the country, or to produce that consequence which could arise only from depopulation, a deficiency in the supply of labour, and through it an enhancement of the rate of wages.

But it may be said, that the keeping up of the price of the necessaries of life has some tendency to prevent marriages, and in this way indirectly to limit population. When wages are high and corn cheap, the number of marriages is observed to increase; in opposite circumstances, to diminish. In the one case, a workman, possessing a surplus income, and usually too improvident to consider that it is of a very transitory nature, is

apt to think that, without sacrificing many of his own indulgences, he may be able to rear a family. In the other case, being daily forced to submit to privations greater than those to which he has been accustomed, he is deterred from incurring any additional charge. Marriages, thus suggested by prosperity, might never have been thought of in ordinary years, and, in this way, plenty, though transitory, is a direct cause of increased population.

That any measure, by which fluctuations in the condition of the labouring classes were prevented, might discourage rash and imprudent marriages, the advocates for such a measure will not be disposed to deny. These marriages, they will contend, are the sources neither of happiness nor of population. Followed quickly by repentance, they are apt to drive the workman to intoxication, as a temporary relief from the misery brought on him by his folly; and the children who survive neglect, want, and every hardship in their infancy, are usually reared without instruction or good example, to be the torments, not the benefactors, of society.

Except by discouraging imprudent marriages, a system of bounties, even though it should maintain the average price of corn somewhat higher than it otherwise would have been, is not unfavourable to population. It is the change in the circumstances of the workman which raises or

sinks his spirits, makes him look with confidence or despondency to his future prospects, and encourages or deters him from undertaking the maintenance of a family. Habitual enjoyments or privations have no such effects. He who is in the receipt of a hundred pounds a year, and has been accustomed to expend that sum on his own gratifications, will no more think of marrying, without a reasonable view of improving his income, than if he had been used to subsist on twenty pounds, and had no expectation of acquiring more. Increase the low income a little, and the change may suggest thoughts of marriage; diminish the higher income a little, and the change will put an end to all such views. Whatever, therefore, makes a permanent alteration on the condition of the people, unless it incapacitate them altogether from rearing a family, can produce but a very temporary effect on the population of the country.

Another opportunity * will occur of presenting these opinions in a point of view somewhat different, and, in particular, of explaining and contrasting the effects which result from lowering the value of money, and those which follow from raising the price of the necessaries of life; effects which Dr Smith considers as precisely the same. In the mean time, enough has probably been said

* See Book III. Part II. Chap. II. Sec. I.

to prove that landholders would derive advantages, not illusory, but real, from a rise in the average price of corn, and that this rise would consequently operate as a direct encouragement to the agriculture of the country.

CHAPTER V.

Of the Distribution of Wealth among the several Classes of the Inhabitants.

SECTION I.

Of the Evils arising from excessive Inequality of Property.

MANY obvious causes concur in producing striking differences between the conditions of the several members of an opulent society. The commercial speculations of all cannot be equally wise and fortunate: invention may open up new paths to wealth, or unforeseen events may bring unexpected success: want of talents, on the other hand, joined to sanguine hopes, may lead to imprudent speculations; the failure of one merchant may occasion embarrassment or ruin to many; and various untoward circumstances may disappoint the best-laid schemes. While one person by industry and frugality adds to his wealth, another, sunk in indolence, or intoxicated with vicious pleasures, squanders away what the parsimony of his ancestors had accumulated;

While one, by the death of his relations and friends, unites several ample fortunes, another is depressed by the misfortunes, imprudence, or vices, of his nearest connections.

To a certain degree, this inequality of riches is conducive to the general good. Variety in the condition of the inhabitants provides workmen of habits and education fitted for the several offices required in society. Some it induces to perform tasks to which nothing but necessity could reconcile the human feelings; others it exempts from manual labour, giving them opportunities, which they could not otherwise enjoy, of cultivating their reason and their taste. If all were equal in comfort and in rank, ambition would cease to be a stimulus to inventive genius, or even to ordinary exertion; and society would sink into universal torpor, productive of ignorance, poverty, and barbarism.

But what is useful in one degree may be very detrimental in another. Though perfect equality of riches ought not to be desired, extreme inequality may be equally pernicious. Nor is the latter of these conditions, like the former, a mere creature of imagination. In every country of Europe, the contrast between the rich and the poor strikes even the most careless observer. In the same town, frequently in the same street, part of the inhabitants riot in abundance with which the most refined luxury can with difficul-

ty keep place; while their brethren, oppressed with want, worn down by labour, diseased and wretched, can scarcely procure enough to satisfy the most urgent demands of nature. The hovel of the beggar adjoins to the palace of the nobleman, and we are presented in the same picture with the extremes of indigence and profusion.

It cannot be such a state of society, from whatever circumstances it may have arisen, that is calculated to promote the happiness of individuals, or the prosperity of the nation.

Even the rich and luxurious, if they were to take a reasonable view of their own situation, or were anxious for the real welfare of their children, would be convinced that they have no interest in supporting excessive inequality of property. A man born to great affluence may almost be said to be predestined to misery. From his infancy, every rising desire, being anxiously watched, is satiated before it has time to expand. He is studiously denied the pleasure of the pursuit, which usually exceeds that of the attainment. He is debarred from those transports with which we welcome happiness of which we had nearly despaired, from that rapture with which we seize an enjoyment which had alternately excited our expectation and our fears. Although all his caprices are flattered, all his desires anticipated, and his gratifications most ingeniously varied, he

feels a want in his own breast which the assiduity of others cannot relieve.

But although the solicitude of those around him can do little for his real happiness, it can guard him from many trifling inconveniences and vexations. Unacquainted with contradiction, and unaccustomed to disappointment, in place of learning self-command, he becomes the abject slave of passion. The virtues of patience, temperance, and fortitude, never having been exercised, become extinct in his breast; his temper is ruffled by the slightest accidents; and if calamity befal him (and what riches can always protect him from misfortune?) he sinks in hopeless despair.

While his mind is thus weakened by habitual indulgence, his understanding is apt to suffer from neglect. Considering his rank in life, and even his amusements, as provided for him without any exertion of his own, he has no vigorous motive for the cultivation either of his reason or his taste. His natural love of indolence is seldom very steadily opposed by those who are appointed to superintend his education, but who find it easier, and more conducive to their own interests, to flatter his parents with false hopes of his improvement, while, betraying their trust, they pay court to all his foibles. With whatever ardour he enters upon study, the first difficulty disgusts him, and, either affecting a contempt of

knowledge, or losing confidence in his own talents, he remains ignorant of energies, which, if called forth, might have rendered him the boast of his friends and the benefactor of his country.

In such a state of mind, he can relish none of those studies and recreations, which improve while they delight. Debarred from simple, rational, heartfelt enjoyments, his life is passed in frivolous amusements, or devoted to guilty pleasures followed by repentance and disgust. The novelty of such pleasures soon passes away; in vain does he seek by variety to give a new relish to enjoyments with which he is sated; surrounded by all imaginable gratifications, the object of admiration, and perhaps of envy, the same apathy, the same ennui, ever pursue him.*

That there are many splendid exceptions to this general representation, it were most illiberal to deny; and probably, from the nature of our government, the hereditary nobility of Britain, more than of any other country, have escaped that ignorance, frivolity, and languor, which are incident to their rank in life. By the same circumstances they must have been guarded, though perhaps not so effectually, from that dissoluteness of morals which has pervaded the higher classes of the rest of Europe. But, notwithstand-

* The character and accomplishments of the great are painted in very lively colours by Dr Smith, in his Theory of Moral Sentiments, Part I. Sec. III. Chap. II.

ing these favourable circumstances, it is to be feared, that sufficient proofs might be found, even among the British nobility, of the tendency of hereditary wealth and grandeur to enfeeble and corrupt the mind.

Evils no less pernicious, and proceeding from the same source, affect the condition of the poor. He who is himself entirely ignorant, who is occupied in incessant labour, who is constantly beset with temptations from idleness or uneasy desires, can have neither time, inclination, nor abilities, to superintend the education, or watch over the morals, of his children. If he provide them with sufficient food, he thinks that he has amply discharged every duty. He allows them to run about without control, till they attain that degree of strength which enables them to add a small pittance to the family income; and the moment that this period arrives, he consigns them to ignorance and hard labour for ever. Of all grievances this total ignorance is the greatest. It smothers the native seeds of genius, degrades the mind, and is a fertile source of every vice. A certain degree of labour is good for man: but that degree which prevents him from informing himself of his interests, his duties, and his rights, is the most destructive of all calamities.

They are surely no easy virtues that are demanded of the poor; industry, frugality, and temperance, amidst every temptation from the

solicitations of ease and immediate enjoyment. The small pittance, which at any one time can be saved, having little perceptible effect on their future welfare, the immediate motive to parsimony is weak, unless strongly supported by fixed principles of duty. But such principles cannot operate strongly on a mind altogether unimproved.

Whatever inducements there may be to constant labour, nature, with irresistible authority, demands occasional relaxation. When the mind has been degraded, when the very idea of any pleasures, but those of sense, has been obliterated, when all moral and intellectual improvement has been withheld, to what relaxations must a man so debased have recourse? To riot and debauchery, fatal to himself, and ruinous to his family.

From the misery brought upon him by these indulgences, he looks up to the splendour and profusion of others; while severely punished by instant poverty, for what is perhaps a casual deviation from virtue, he sees immense sums lavished on show, folly, and dissipation; and he cannot easily avoid the reflection, that a very small portion of this superfluity would remove all his wants, and restore his family to happiness and content. He cannot see the price that is paid for this splendour; he never suspects the care, the disgust, the remorse, which are covered by

smiles. Connecting the situation of the rich with ease, admiration, and pleasure, hearing of the excesses in which they indulge, and finding nothing in their characters to entitle them to such distinction, he repines at his own lot in the world, his peace of mind is corroded by envy, and guilty desires insinuate themselves into his thoughts.

In this situation, man, losing all ambition, becomes discontented with the present, and careless of the future. Habits of self-indulgence grow upon him; his labour becomes irksome; he seeks to drown reflection in riotous debauchery; and that he may procure the means of idleness and dissipation, he commits slight transgressions, till, by degrees, becoming hardened in iniquity, he no longer shrinks from the most flagitious crimes.

"The needy man who has known better days,
"One whom distress has spited at the world,
"Is he whom tempting fiends would pitch upon
"To do such deeds, as make the prosperous men
"Lift up their hands, and wonder who could do them."*

The evils resulting from great inequality of property are not, however, confined to the very rich and the very poor, to those who are at the opposite extremities of the great chain of civil so-

* Home's Douglas.

ciety; they pervade every connecting link, contaminating the morals of the whole nation.

When the two extremes of opulence and want are continually before our eyes, we acquire a habit of connecting the one with every thing we can desire, the other with every thing we would wish to shun. Riches become associated in our minds with independence, splendour, respect, and happiness; poverty with servility, misery, and contempt. A man is no longer valued according to his real worth, his moral and intellectual attainments, but according to his apparent wealth; and while even the wise are led by custom to pay an involuntary respect to the opulent, the indigent are treated with scorn or neglect. The great object of life comes to be the acquisition of such a fortune as may support a splendid appearance in the world; and hence a general rapacity prevails: not that laudable desire of independence and comfort which prompts to industry and reasonable economy, but an insatiable thirst of gain which undermines every virtue.

It has been observed, that dislike of poverty acts in different directions on people of opposite characters; some, influenced by an excessive fear of want, become so penurious as to deny themselves the use of what they have acquired; others, unable to endure the contempt attached to poverty, seek the reputation of riches by incurring

expenses which they can ill afford; and these expenses, in spite of every rapacity, soon bring upon them that indigence, of which they so much dread the imputation.

To this source of profusion, another, still more powerful, must be added. The ostentatious pleasures of the rich create desires in their inferiors, who, scorning to be outdone in folly, imitate expensive amusements, dress, and equipage, which their more limited fortunes cannot support. An emulation in extravagance springs up, which has been aptly compared to a race between the different ranks in society, and the members of the several classes; each endeavouring to outstrip his equals, and to overtake those who are before him. This race may furnish a subject of regret to the philosopher, and of ridicule to the satirist; but it is vain to hope that it should cease, while overgrown fortunes continue to dazzle mankind by their brilliant extravagance.

The consequences are most destructive to happiness and to morals. No man, whatever be his rank, can live with ease in the style expected from his fortune, and at the same time make a proper provision for his children. He must either sacrifice his comfort to appearances, or incur with the thoughtless the imputation of avarice, or exceed in his expenditure the bounds of prudence. He is so beset with temptations, so goaded on by this foolish emulation, either in himself or his

family, that, without great self-command, he is constantly in danger of incurring debt. So notorious has the difficulty become of saving from an annual income what is requisite for the proper establishment of a family, that the imprudence of him who marries, before he has realized a fortune, is universally condemned. Hence the prevalence of celibacy, and of all the disorders which it occasions.

The prodigality, which, through emulation in expense, is thus derived from excessive inequality of property, is not confined to one rank or condition, but extends, by a most destructive contagion, to every class of people. Whatever a man's property may be, it is rarely equal to his wants. In this view, all may be pronounced equally poor; or rather it will be found that difficulty, embarrassment, and pecuniary distress bear somewhat of a direct proportion to the extent of the estate.

Nothing can be more fatal to public spirit than this substitution of avarice on the one hand, and profusion on the other, for that reasonable economy which is the surest foundation of independence of mind. He who has centered all his desires in riches, still more the man who has ruined his fortune, or is haunted by the idea that he must one day leave his family in indigence, has a strong temptation acting constantly on his mind. To the former, all public motives will ap-

pear light when opposed to the opportunity of attaining that wealth which is the great object of his life: to the latter, almost every means of escape from the degradation with which he is threatened will be welcome. He already anticipates the privation of habitual indulgences, the coldness of pretended friends, the reproaches, not less severe that they may be silent, of his children, the contempt of the world, and all the miseries of indigence. Poverty appears before him clad in all her horrors, and that virtue must be firmly fixed which yields not to so formidable an assailant. The desertion of his party at a critical time may at once retrieve his ruined fortunes, or the zealous support of administration, when he secretly disapproves of their measures, may provide for his destitute family. Can we wonder that a man placed in such circumstances should sell his conscience and his country?

In those who carry on the infamous traffic of venality, public principle must soon be extinct; and their number is so great, their rank so imposing, that they lose all consciousness of guilt, and almost glory in their shame.* Meanwhile, the rest of the community, observing this open barter of principle for wealth or place, and deceived in many pretenders to independence, lose all confidence in the virtue of public men.

* See Lord Melcombe's Diary throughout.

They see nothing around them but a factious contest for private emolument, a scramble for office, not as the means of promoting the public welfare, or even of gratifying ambition, but as the source of immediate affluence, and the easiest mode of putting children forward in the world. Amidst general corruption openly avowed, they rashly conclude that patriotism is a word destitute of meaning, used only for the purpose of imposing on the lowest of the people. To point out the destructive effects of this disregard, and even disbelief, of public principle, both on morals and politics, must surely be superfluous. No man can be so blind as not to perceive that its necessary consequences are universal corruption, the loss of every advantage attending free government, and the most deplorable degradation of human nature.

What is thus subversive of morals and patriotism is not likely to be favourable to the prosperity or power of the state; neither is it conducive to the production and accumulation of wealth.

A very extensive proprietor is seldom in circumstances which enable him to improve his estate. All his habits are in direct opposition to the activity, attention, economy, and perseverance, without which, attempts to improve lands must be a source, not of profit, but of expense. The whole detail being necessarily left to servants, by whom their master's interests will be

neglected, or perhaps his property embezzled, when the operations are completed, he will find himself poorer than before. Unless the indolence and carelessness incident to wealth could be corrected, the improvement of land by a great proprietor can never repay that outlay, which, as it will not be saved from his ordinary expenditure, must be a deduction from the capital of the nation.

The greater the estate, the more difficulty there usually is in confining the annual expenditure within the annual income. Unaccustomed to deny themselves any indulgence, brought up with the idea that economy is a plebeian virtue, too proud to be outdone in expense by men whom they account their inferiors, ignorant of details, and too careless to correct even that extravagance in their domestics which forces itself on their observation, the great, amidst all their affluence, are continually harassed by clamorous demands. In such circumstances it avails nothing to be convinced, that by a moderate outlay, the value of an estate may be greatly enhanced. If the proprietor is to improve, he must begin by adding to his debts and embarrassments. Being already in difficulties, he will find the regular payment of the interest an intolerable burden; and when he becomes possessed of an advanced rent, being unused to calculation or foresight, he will be apt to enjoy the temporary re-

lief, without making adequate provision for the repayment of the loan. His expenses will increase as his rents are advanced; again he will exceed his improved income, and at last, when he can borrow no longer, he will be forced to sell part of his estate to pay the debts contracted for its improvement. Experience has abundantly warned great proprietors of the danger which by this mode of proceeding they incur, and they very generally prefer the alternative, which is also recommended by indolence, of allowing their lands to remain unimproved.

The same circumstances are unfavourable to the ameliorations which, under good management, the tenants would find it for their own interest to effect. Proprietors, who are pressed by urgent demands, are apt to grasp at immediate income, even when they know that it must be followed by ultimate loss. They prefer the tenant who offers the highest rent, to him who is most likely to do justice to the farm. In the expectation of a rise of rent, from the general prosperity of the country, they refuse to grant such leases as might encourage the tenant to adopt the most expensive but most beneficial system of culture. Nay so far do they sometimes carry their short-sighted folly, as to exact a fine at the commencement of the lease; thus diminishing the capital of the farmer which ought to have been employed in stocking his farm, and

forcing him to cultivate the land in an imperfect manner, prejudicial to his own interests and ruinous to the estate.

To say nothing of the large tracts of country, which, being employed as parks, shrubberies, and pleasure grounds, yield little, if any, produce, and may be considered as scarcely forming part of the fixed capital of the state, these circumstances sufficiently prove that great inequality is detrimental to the most important branch of the national industry and wealth. "There still remain," says Dr Smith, "in both parts of the "united kingdom, some great estates which have "continued without interruption in the hands of "the same family since the times of feudal anar-"chy. Compare the present condition of these "estates with the possessions of the small pro-"prietors in the neighbourhood, and you will re-"quire no other argument to convince you how "unfavourable such extensive property is to im-"provement."*

It is equally certain, that extreme inequality of property diminishes both the amount and the value of the labour of the nation. It is not only the rich who are lost to industry, but their whole train of dependants, all those who, imitating their manners, prefer idleness which they can ill afford, to industry which would enable them to live

* Wealth of Nations, Book III. Chap. II.

in comfort. It being considered as the characteristic of a gentleman to do no kind of work, all who wish to rank with gentlemen must imitate their lazy pride. To support what is looked upon as the honourable distinction of uselessness, many prefer to honest industry, the most pinching poverty, the most teazing embarrassments, or the most irksome and degrading of all employments, that of being sycophants to the rich. To Mr Hume, this prejudice against the useful professions, appeared sufficient of itself to account for the decline of commerce under despotical governments.* It is the constant result of civil inequalities, by which marked distinctions are made between the higher and subordinate classes of the inhabitants; but it is also invariably occasioned by such inequalities of property, as, by raising the rich far above the necessity of managing, or even inspecting the management of, their own estates, give fashion to frivolity and indolence. Accordingly, in England, this prejudice against the useful professions prevails in a considerable degree, although the right to equal justice is extended to all.

The vice and profligacy which have been traced to excessive inequality, are not less detrimental to industry; and whatever occasions ignorance in the lower classes of the inhabitants, must, in

* Hume's Essays, Part I. Essay XII.

the same degree, retard the improvement of many of the processes of manufacture. The more generally education is diffused, the greater probability there evidently must be of calling forth genius, by which useful discoveries may be made or perfected. The first hint is often given by the speculative philosopher, but the whole adaptation to practice must be the work of mechanics intimately acquainted with all the parts of the process, with all the defects of the machinery in use, and with the various inconveniences that may attend what in theory seems an improvement. When the workmen are intelligent, new schemes are every day proposed, and those which promise to be useful are rapidly matured: when, on the other hand, they are ignorant, every thing is carried on by a routine ill understood, and what might have enriched the nation, though admired for its ingenuity, remains imperfect and inapplicable to the arts. It is in vain to expect comprehensive views, or any ingenious application of facts, though almost forced on the observation of the workman, from a mind unused to reason or reflect; and, accordingly, though many of the most important discoveries have been made on the continent, they have almost all been improved and adapted to practice in England, where the education of the people, however faulty, is better than in other countries, and where the interest excited by public affairs, and the contentions of

political parties, informs, exercises, and invigorates the mind.

If the annual produce of the land and labour be thus diminished, it is probable that the accumulation of capital will, at least in an equal degree, be retarded. Even should we suppose that the accumulation bore always the same proportion to the funds of the society, excessive inequality must, in this way, be detrimental to the general wealth. But there can be little doubt that the amount of the annual accumulation bears a much higher proportion to the whole of the revenue, in an opulent country, than in one which is poor. In the latter, the income of each individual, being little more than what procures him the necessaries, and a few of the most indispensable comforts, of life, the state of the inhabitants improves by slow and almost imperceptible gradations. But in countries already opulent, the general wealth advances with rapid and gigantic strides. Even inequality of property, though it may check, cannot altogether destroy, this prolific power of riches.

The habits of profusion, however, engendered by inequality, have a powerful effect in retarding the natural progress of opulence. It is to the middling classes of society, who have learned from necessity early habits of economy, who have been anxious when young to advance themselves in the world, and at a later period to provide for

their children, that we must look for that frugality which is the only means of accumulating wealth. The great, educated in indulgence, splendour, and profusion, find even their immense incomes too narrow for their growing expenses. When they happen indeed to be economical, the rapidity of their accumulation is likely to exceed what could have taken place, if several families, in place of one only, had drawn their subsistence from the annual revenue. But neither will a disposition so contrary to the education and habits of the rich be frequently formed, nor will the immense wealth, sometimes thus accumulated, be directed to the most beneficial employments.

The most natural way of vesting an overgrown fortune is in land. In such cases, however, it will be more advantageous to purchase a very large estate, than for a proprietor, probably ignorant of country affairs, to engage in an extensive system of improvement; and the very first successor will be in the same circumstances which disable other landholders from rendering their extensive estates productive. In this way, a very large fortune, by engrossing a number of moderate properties, may even be hurtful to the agriculture of the country.

Overgrown capitals, if engaged in trade, are apt to be employed in a manner equally disadvantageous. They usually seek branches of com-

merce from which the slowness of the returns excludes all those who defray their annual expenses from their annual profits, or they become vested in extensive and distant speculations in which they have little competition to fear. They open up, indeed, new channels in which less opulent traders would never have adventured; but in doing so, they divert the national wealth from those nearer employments in which it would have furnished more encouragement to domestic industry, and occasioned a greater consumption and reproduction in the country.

It can require no argument to prove, that what diminishes the annual produce of the land, capital, and labour, what retards the progress of wealth, and directs those riches which are acquired to the least useful employments, must circumscribe that population which is maintained by the produce of the land, capital, and labour, and consequently prove injurious to the power and security of the state.

SECTION II.

Of Equalization of Property.

When the evils of excessive inequality are presented to our view; when it is shown to be productive of misery both to the rich and the poor; to be subversive of morality, the bane of patriotism, the prolific mother of corruption and of crimes; to be prejudicial to agriculture, to population, to national wealth, and to national power; it seems natural to wish at once to remove all those evils, by taking from the rich what is really hurtful to themselves, and bestowing it on the poor, whose necessities it would instantly relieve.

Were the right of property altogether the creature of civil society,* instituted merely from views of utility, and liable to change with every fluctuation of expected advantage, it might be competent to the majority of a nation, unless restrained by prudence, to institute a community of goods, or to divide the possessions of the rich among the poor. But the right of property, like all the other rights of man, stands on more

* Rousseau du Contrat Social, Liv. I. Chap. IX.

solid foundations, being firmly established on the universal and invariable sentiments of mankind.

The simplest view that can be taken of this subject is to attend to the feelings that would arise in the breast of a spectator, while one person endeavoured to dispossess another of any object already under his natural power. To the spectator, the interests of the two competitors would be equally important; and, as he could have no sympathy with the preference which the aggressor gave to his own happiness over that of the other, he must disapprove of it as improper. By being in possession of the subject in dispute, one of the parties had formed a natural and reasonable expectation of enjoying it; the attempt of the other threatened to disappoint this just expectation; to render the situation of his neighbour in some respects worse than it was before; to diminish his enjoyment, or, in other words, to do him a positive injury. The spectator would fully sympathize with the resentment which such conduct was fitted to excite, and would readily assist in retaining possession, or in recovering what was unjustly withheld. The aggressor, unless in the disappointment of self-preference, which none could approve, would suffer no actual loss by the refusal of the object he desired; his situation would be exactly the same as before he made the demand; he would be deprived neither of any enjoyment, nor of any reasonable ex-

pectation of enjoyment. In such circumstances, the resentment which he might express would appear to others highly absurd. Where the difference of sympathetic feelings was so strong, the spectator never could hesitate with respect to the propriety of interference to maintain a just right; and thus an idea of property would arise from the circumstance of possession. Accordingly occupancy, the mere laying hold of a subject, has by all writers on jurisprudence, and on the laws of all countries, been accounted the chief mode of beginning a right of property; and in many rude nations this right is conceived to subsist no longer than actual possession.*

Various circumstances concur to strengthen this right. Few acquisitions are made without the employment of some labour or ingenuity, and no association can be stronger than that between a man and the produce of his own bodily or mental exertion. This exertion was altogether voluntary; and while it marked, in the strongest manner, the desire of enjoyment, it may have added greatly to the value of the object, or perhaps may have been the chief or sole cause of its being brought into a situation in which it is fitted to supply human wants. By building a house, a man evinces his intention of possessing it, and puts materials, formerly of little value, in-

* Kames's Hist. Law Tracts, Tract III,

to such a form as may afford him shelter and convenience. Should another, who had given no assistance to the work, endeavour to dispossess him, the difference between their respective rights would be obvious to the most careless observer.* Even when this, the strongest of all claims, does not exist; when the property has descended from ancestors or other relations; still there are various associations, some of which will be afterwards noticed,† that add weight to the other moral feelings, and confirm the right arising from occupancy.

These sentiments are independent of civil society, and would be experienced the moment that one person attempted, in the presence of spectators, to seize the property of another. But, as much injustice might be committed unseen, the occasional interference of accidental spectators would soon be felt a very insufficient security; and those, living in the same neighbourhood, would naturally be led to associate for their mutual protection. So far, then, from the right of property being the creature of civil society, it may be truly asserted that the defence of this right is one of the great original ends of the social combination.‡

* Locke on Civil Government, Book II. Chap. V.

† Section IV. of this Chapter.

‡ Book I. Chap. I. Sec. I. and V.

When society has improved, general rules in favour of property are established by habit and experience. Each individual, having decided a great number of separate cases from his natural feelings, forms general rules, which he afterwards applies in similar circumstances, without recurring to the sentiments by which his early judgments had been guided. These rules, strengthened by a longer experience, at last become so powerful as to regulate his opinions, even when his pity, his friendships, or his aversions, might have seduced his sympathies, and led him to commit injustice. The same rules, inculcated in infancy, take the firmest possession of the minds of his children, and gradually acquire an authority superior to that of any sentiments by which, in particular cases, their judgments might be warped.

When, in the progress of improvement, man comes to speculate on the more distant tendencies of his actions, he must perceive that exclusive possession is the strongest incitement to labour, ingenuity, and enterprise; that the certainty of exclusive possession can be secured only by the most constant adherence to general rules; and that the whole fabric of civil society depends on the strict and uniform observance of the maxims of rigid justice. The right of property is then firmly established on all those extended and liberal views of public good which many authors

have conceived to be the original foundation of rights and duties.*

All schemes of levelling are evidently destructive of the rights of property: they disappoint the reasonable expectations of the present proprietors; they reduce men educated in affluence to comparative indigence; they deprive many of the fruits of their own labour, ingenuity, and economy; they are in direct opposition to those rules and principles of morality which have been sanctioned by the unanimous consent of mankind, and which are absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of security, order, and happiness. Such an equalization differs in no respect from robbery, except in being the act of a greater number of criminals, in causing greater immediate misery, and producing much more pernicious effects. Neither government, nor any majority of a nation, can have a right, for the purpose of creating equality, to attack that property which society was, in a great measure, instituted to defend. Were such an attempt to be made, it would amount to a dissolution of the social combination; the government would no longer possess any claim to obedience; and the minority

* These observations on the origin and nature of the right of property are a mere sketch of the admirable discussion on this subject, which formed a branch of Professor Millar's Lectures on Jurisprudence, delivered in the university of Glasgow.

would be justified in defending, by open force, those rights which the majority had attacked.

It is, however, happy for man, that what is unjust is never expedient; that crimes, so far from being of advantage to their perpetrators, are always followed by natural punishments. Even self-interest is thus constrained to plead the cause of virtue. There are few subjects which exemplify this connection between justice and expediency more clearly, than that which we are now considering; for as nothing could be more unjust than an equalization of property, so nothing could be more destructive of the prosperity of any nation by which it should be accomplished.

The first effect of carrying a system of levelling into execution would be the complete suspension of industry. The education and habits of the rich unfit them for most kinds of productive labour. Accustomed to a life of ease and effeminacy, they are destitute of the requisite patience, strength, and address; and would have a long apprenticeship to serve before their utmost exertions could be beneficial to themselves or the community. Nor could the poor be expected to continue their present industry and frugality. It is a natural consequence of their situation, that they should look on labour as the greatest evil, ease as the supreme good. When they were for a time enabled to live in idleness; when they found themselves possessed of pro-

perty, trifling indeed compared to the wants which would immediately beset them, but great compared to their former indigence; when the pressure of the moment, their usual motive to exertion, was removed: in such new circumstances, the poor, indulging in luxuries formerly unknown, would totally remit their labours, all the vices which spring from idleness would be multiplied, and the whole nation being occupied, not in productive labour, but in consuming those riches which already existed, universal poverty would speedily ensue.

Habits of idleness and debauchery, occasioned by this division of property, would soon impel those who had squandered their portions, to seize on the possessions of their neighbours. All other means of retrieving their affairs, or maintaining their families, would indeed be precluded. The wealth of the country being annihilated, there would no longer be funds destined for the support of labourers and mechanics, or any demand for the produce of their labour. Part of the people might be employed in agriculture and in manufactures of the first necessity; but the rest, unless they emigrated to a more happy country, would be forced to rob for their subsistence, or to perish miserably from want.

The ruinous consequences of a division of property would never cease, until the nation, renouncing forced equality, again returned to

the paths of justice. No scheme has yet been devised for rendering men equal in industry, frugality, and fortune; and till this be accomplished, equality of property, even if it should be established by a general law, must be of very short duration. In the course of a week, it would be infringed; before the termination of a year, few vestiges of it would remain. A second division would be called for to secure the advantages vainly expected from the first. Unless this new division were adopted, we should have overturned the foundation of the right of property, we should have caused the most cruel reverses of fortune, we should have corrupted the morals of the nation, we should have at once annihilated industry and the whole of that capital which renders industry productive: we should have done all this, without, in any degree, approaching to our object. Among those perishing from want, would be many whose wealth had been shared among their poorer neighbours, and it would be the most aggravated injustice to refuse to apply that principle to their present relief, which had formerly been the cause of their degradation and ruin. The same circumstances which occasioned a second division would soon call imperiously for more, and all idea of private property would, in a short time, be obliterated.

Surely, of all inventions for bringing misery on mankind, this would be the most effectual.

Each would hasten to enjoy and consume his portion of riches, while it was yet in his power. Who would be temperate or frugal, when he knew that his economy was destined to feed the insatiable appetites of the profligate? Who would labour, when he knew that the fruits of his industry were to be gathered by the idle? Who would put a curb on his passions, when his family, however numerous, were to occasion no more privations to himself than to others? In such circumstances, all the virtues of private life would instantly disappear, and mankind would exhibit a uniform and disgusting picture of sloth, extravagance, and debauchery. The miseries arising from inequality of property, and even from the worst of tyrannies, would be happiness compared to such a condition.

So deeply rooted, however, is the sense of justice in the breast of man, and so very obvious are the evils which must result from an equalization of property, that no successful, and scarcely any serious, attempt at levelling, is recorded in the annals of mankind.

In Sparta, it is true, there existed more equality than in any other country, and this equality has been very generally ascribed to a division of the lands made by Lycurgus. This mode of accounting for singular institutions, by referring them to a favourite legislator, while it has some appearance of investigation, is strongly recom-

mended both by the indolence and the admiration of mankind. Every part of the history of Lycurgus, however, is involved in such obscurity, that it is even uncertain at what period he lived, and in what country he died.* At the distance of three hundred years, the time which is supposed to have elapsed between the promulgation of his laws and the earliest historian, it must evidently have become impossible to separate his institutions, preserved merely by oral tradition, from those customs which had been gradually introduced by the state of society and manners.

There seems no reason to believe that the Spartans had ever enjoyed opportunities of acquiring much wealth, or that they had achieved such conquests as might enable them to assign large tracts of country to individuals. The lands had probably been appropriated by the different families according to their wants, numbers, and activity; and the portions so appropriated would not at first be very unequal. For a long time, there being neither opportunities of amassing great riches, nor inducements to extravagance, this equality would naturally continue, and alienation of lands would be almost unknown. In the early law of every nation, the transference of land by sale, being unusual, is looked upon with disapprobation, and either fettered

* Plutarch's Life of Lycurgus.

with restrictions, or altogether prohibited. The Spartans, having little or no commerce with foreign nations, remained long in this condition, and the dislike of alienation became at last a striking feature in the national character. This, joined to the rudeness and simplicity of manners, proceeding partly from a state of almost constant warfare, and partly from want of intercourse with foreigners, may perhaps account for that long continuance of equality in landed possessions which has usually been ascribed to positive institution.

At so early a period as that of Lycurgus, it seems altogether impossible, in the circumstances of Sparta, that such inequalities could have arisen as might have induced a legislator to apply a remedy so unjust in itself, and so contrary to the interests of all the leading men in the state. Accordingly Xenophon makes no mention of this pretended division of lands among the institutions of this lawgiver, and those writers, on whose authority it is admitted, differ widely from each other respecting the number of lots, the quantity of land contained in each, and the time when alienation, which must speedily have overthrown the fancied equality, was permitted by law.*

In the later times of Sparta, indeed, an attempt

* Plutarch's Life of Lycurgus, ib. Life of Agis. See Le Voyage du Jeune Anarcharsis, Chap. XLVI.

was made by Agis to revive what was conceived to be the ancient laws of the commonwealth, and thi sattempt, though it related only to landed property, approaches near er to a general equalization than any other recorded in well-authenticated history. Its fate may show the impossibility of such an enterprise being successful. Although the young patriot, by whom it was proposed, was one of the kings, and the most opulent man in the nation, though he joined to these advantages the influence of superior talents, and of morals bordering on austerity, though he had filled all the offices of the state with his own relations and dependants, and, without any view to personal aggrandizement, sought to revive a regulation associated in the minds of the people with the former prosperity and glory of their country; yet he was unable to prevail, or even to defend his life against the power of his exasperated enemies.*

At the time of Solon, very considerable inequality, the consequence of extended commerce, prevailed at Athens; and the people, oppressed with debts which they were unable to pay, exposed to the unrelenting severities of their creditors, and contrasting their own situation with the equality of Sparta, demanded a new partition of lands. But almost as soon as Solon had cancel-

* Plutarch's Life of Agis.

led the debts then owing, by a law similar in principle to those acts of insolvency which have frequently been passed in England, the nation was satisfied;* and although very great inequality continued to prevail, and the people had the fullest control over every department of the state, no proposal for a new division of lands was afterwards agitated.

Early in the Roman history, we are informed that great inequality of property was introduced by the conquest of the neighbouring states and the seizure of their lands. Many of the people were reduced to despair by the severities of their creditors, in consequence of debts contracted during the wars, while fortunes so immense were accumulated by others as to endanger the liberties of the country. This evil continued to increase, and towards the end of the republic, had arisen to a pitch far beyond what has yet been experienced in modern times. During the greater part of this period, the supreme power was possessed by the people, yet no law was promulgated which can justly be considered as an infringement of the right of property. The Agrarian Law, however, has sometimes been represented as an attempt at equalization, and therefore it may be requisite to enquire shortly into its origin and history.

* Plutarch's Life of Solon.

After the expulsion of the kings, the patrician families, having acquired an authority almost uncontrouled, were enabled to appropriate to their own use lands conquered by the arms of the state. Accordingly, in the year of Rome 267, only 24 years after the establishment of the republic, this evil had proceeded so far as to attract the attention of the people, and gave rise to the demand of an agrarian law. As the demand extended no farther than to a division of those lands which had been acquired by the labour and courage of all the citizens, nothing could be more just. But after those estates had been long appropriated by the noble families, they seemed to be held by a prescriptive right, and the agrarian law was gradually laid aside, unless when, from time to time, the mention of it was revived, as the means of forcing the patricians to other just and reasonable concessions. At last, the lands in the vicinity of Rome were engrossed by a few proprietors, who, cultivating their estates by slaves, filled Italy with foreigners, and prevented the increase of the free citizens, on whose votes the liberties of their country, and on whose valour its safety, altogether depended.

To remedy these evils, in the year of Rome 385, the Licinian law was passed, by which any individual was prohibited from possessing in Italy more than five hundred jugera (supposed to be about three hundred and fifty acres,) under the

penalty of a fine and of the confiscation of whatever might exceed the legal quantity. This law was very different from a division of property. It affected neither moveables, nor land in the provinces; it put no restriction on the acquisition or enjoyment of wealth, but merely regulated, in one article, the mode in which riches might be vested. If the proprietors, as seems probable, were indemnified for the lands of which they were deprived, it was not different in principle from the forced sales authorized by the road and canal bills of modern times.

This law was easily evaded by holding lands under fictitious names, and by degrees the same abuses again prevailed. Tiberius Gracchus seems to have judged wisely that the Licinian law was expedient in a warlike republic; though, perhaps, he undervalued too much the obstacles which the influence of wealth, and the general corruption, opposed to its revival. The law which he first proposed was mild beyond example; remitting all the fines incurred by the violation of the Licinian law, and indemnifying the proprietors for the lands which the public good required them to resign.* This moderate proposal being violently opposed, the clause of indemnification was struck out, and the law, after an obstinate struggle and many irregularities, was ultimately

* Plutarch s Life of Tiberius Gracchus.

enacted. Although those who had violated the Licinian law were still excused from the fine which their conduct had incurred, yet, such was their rancour against Tiberius Gracchus, that soon after, on the most frivolous pretences, this accomplished patriot was murdered in the forum. By this crime, the prelude to many massacres and proscriptions, the agrarian law was eluded; till, about ten years afterwards, it was again brought forward by Caius Gracchus, who added a clause, fixing a tribute to be paid to the state, by the new proprietors of the sequestered lands. The fate of Caius Gracchus was similar to that of his brother, and no attempt was afterwards made to revive or enforce the Licinian law.

Such is a short history of the agrarian law of Rome. It never had the slightest tendency to levelling, but merely proposed to restrict the monopoly of lands in the vinicity of the city. It was such a regulation of property as it is competent for every state to enact, and it seems not improbable, that by maintaining a large body of the citizens untainted by the vices of the town, yet sufficiently near to influence the public councils, it might have had some tendency to retard the corruptions of the government and the downfall of the republic.

It is at least as difficult to find any traces of a levelling spirit in modern, as in ancient, times. The feudal system introduced customs and opinions highly favourable to the gentry, to those

who were born to opulence, and could boast their descent from a long line of renowned ancestors. These prejudices are gradually wearing away, but they lent, and still continue to lend, powerful support to inequality both of property and of rights. Modern Europe exhibits a picture, not of the turbulence and injustice of the lower orders, but of the oppressions exercised upon them by the rich; and even in the midst of revolutions of governments and opinions, the rights of property, though in many individual cases infringed, have never been attacked by any general law, or threatened by any considerable faction in any state.

Switzerland was the first of modern nations that, spurning all authority but that of reason, dared to be free. Roused by the most insolent oppressions, trusting to her mountains and the valour of her sons, she indignantly threw off every foreign yoke, and established her independence on the rout and dismay of her enemies. During this struggle, while the minds of the people were exasperated to the utmost, no scheme of levelling was proposed: nor in the subsequent history of those cantons which established governments purely democratical, can the least vestige of an attempt at equalization be discovered.

The subversion of all established government in Holland, the long war against the power of Spain, and the difficulties and distresses in which the people were frequently involved, afforded op-

portunities of executing a general attack by the poor on the property of the rich, had not such attacks been repugnant to popular feeling. At later periods, too, there have been commotions in Holland, during which the administration was overawed, the form of government changed, and the greatest excesses committed; but on none of those occasions was any wish expressed for attacking the immense fortunes which had been accumulated by the industry and economy of individuals.

During the civil wars in England, a few enthusiasts,* misinterpreting texts of scripture, pretended that a community of goods was ordered by the christian religion. This opinion, altogether the result of religious fanaticism, was received by a very small and insignificant sect. The tenet was never adopted by the great body of the independants, or even by that faction who have been denominated Levellers. When the independants first aspired to an equality of religious privileges, and secretly, perhaps, to a preponderancy in the state, they found it necessary to counterbalance the influence acquired by the presbyterians in parliament, and in the city of London, by the terrors which an army attached to their principles might inspire. They accordingly instituted a council, composed of deputies, called Agitators, chosen by the com

* Called Fifth Monarchy Men.

mon soldiers. After they had succeeded in overawing parliament, the leading men among the independants sought to terminate those deliberations which might become dangerous to their own power; but the soldiery, sensible of their strength, refused for some time to obey, and openly claimed an equal right with their generals, in settling the form of government. By later writers,* the name of Levellers, by which this party was distinguished, has been held to be descriptive of their tenets respecting property; but to these authors, who were strongly prejudiced against the independants, we may oppose the superior authority of Ludlow,† who represents them as called Levellers merely in derision, together with that of Harrington, who, writing only six or seven years after they were quelled, asserts, that it is impossible for the people ever to wish the equalization of property, and passes over without notice this attempt, which, had it taken place, must have been fresh in the recollection of all his readers.‡ In one of the pub-

* Hume and Rapin.

† See Ludlow's Memoirs, in which this desire of equalizing property, which, in later times, has been ascribed without any authority to the levellers, is not even hinted at.

‡ "Wherefore a people never will, nor ever can, never did, "nor ever shall, take up arms for levelling."

Prerogative of Popular Government, Book I. Chap. VIII.

"By levelling, they who use the word seem to understand, "when a people rising invades the lands and estates of the

lications of Lilburne, a leading man in the party, entitled, *An Agreement of the Free People of England*, it was expressly declared that it should not be in the power of the representative to level men's estates, destroy property, or make all things common.*

As few traces of a levelling spirit can be found in the more recent revolutions of France. The greatest enormities have been committed, whole classes of the inhabitants have been plundered, and many individuals put to death in order to seize their possessions; but the injustice, however aggravated, proceeded from no desire of equalizing property. It was the result of the public wants, and of private rapacity and ambition; it was owing to the enormous expenses incurred in the national defence, to the necessity of great pecuniary sacrifices to ensure success, and of success to support the reigning faction, and sometimes also to ignorance or timidity in the rulers. The only party accused of entertaining principles, subversive of property, was denounced on that account by Robespierre, and instantly overthrown.† In the progress of the revolution, in-

"richer sort, and divides them equally among themselves; "as for example—No where in the world; this being that, "both in the way and in the end, which I have already de- "monstrated to be impossible."—*Ibid. Chap. XI.*

* See Macauley's History, particularly a note in Vol. V. Chap. I.

† The faction, headed by Hebert and Chaumette, were ac-

deed, all parties proposed to establish perfect equality, but that they meant equality, not of property, but of rights, may be incontestibly proved by a reference to the declarations of the Rights of Man, which preceded the several constitutions adopted for the government of France. "Property being a right inviolable and sacred," says the constitution 1791,* "no person can be "deprived of it except when the public neces- "sity, legally ascertained, shall evidently re- "quire it, and on condition of a just indemnifi- "cation." The constitution 1795, formed by the faction of Robespierre, and justly characterized as anarchical, is not less explicit. "No man "can be deprived of his property without his "own consent, unless when public necessity, "legally proved, requires it, and upon condition "of a just indemnification."† It is altogether impossible that these declarations should have been solemnly emitted if the parties then in power had entertained the most remote idea of openly attacking the property of the rich.

This short review of some of the principal revolutions of government may show that the fear of levelling is altogether chimerical, and that the right of property, even in the most disturbed and disorderly times, has always been protected by the good sense and upright intentions of the people.

cused by their enemies of entertaining levelling principles. Probably it was a calumny to ensure their destruction.

* Article 17th. † Article 16th.

SECTION III.

Of Sumptuary Laws.

When the extremes of opulence and poverty first excite attention, men naturally endeavour to throw a veil over that contrast which experience has suggested no means of removing. To divide the superfluous riches of the wealthy among the poor, is repugnant to the dictates of justice; but to prevent one class of the inhabitants from insulting, by their splendid extravagance, the indigence of another, seems a much less violent interposition of government. To the older citizens, this luxury, so different from the manners of what they consider as better times, seems in itself highly reprehensible: they look upon it as frivolous, effeminate, and vicious; they fear the effects on general morals, on the public prosperity, on the warlike character of the nation; and under these impressions, they are anxious to adopt regulations which have a tendency to support old plainness and moderation, against new and destructive encroachments.

On a slight view, there is something imposing in a nation consenting to relinquish part of the uses and enjoyment of wealth, from considerations of the public good. By diminishing the

contrast between opulence and poverty, sumptuary laws might be expected to render each man content with his situation in life; to save the rich from the languor, frivolity, and dissipation attached to excessive indulgence, and the poor from envy and depression of mind. By moderating splendour and ostentation, they may mitigate, not only the rapacious desire of acquiring wealth which occasions dishonesty, but also that avarice which is the source of selfishness, and that profusion which leads to ruin. By checking these vices, they may delay the progress of political corruption, give steadiness and regularity to the advancement of national opulence, and train up a numerous population, prepared by habits of industry and sobriety, and incited by a pure patriotism, undebased by venality either in the government or the people, to protect the rights and liberties of the country.

Unfortunately for mankind, such expectations have never been realized by sumptuary laws; though the endeavour to realize them has sometimes given birth to regulations inconsistent with the fundamental principles of justice.

It must ever be a vain and futile attempt to promote the happiness of an individual by legislative restrictions on his actions. The very prohibition of an enjoyment gives vigour to desire, and what, without the interference of government, might have been viewed with indifference,

is afterwards pursued with all the eagerness of passion. To enforce moderation by laws, in the view of consulting the welfare of the rich, is to trespass on the province of private judgment, and to infringe those natural rights of man which government was instituted to protect.

It is equally unjust to establish sumptuary laws with a view to the advantage of the poor. By such laws, if effectual, the property of the rich is rendered less valuable in their own estimation, and in that of the people; one of its uses, that indeed which appears to many the most important, its capacity of attracting notice and admiration, is entirely prohibited. The property itself may, therefore, be considered as diminished, and this is done for the benefit of those to whom it does not belong. The injustice, though it extends not to all the uses of wealth, is exactly of the same nature with that arising from a general equalization.

This is a case in which government has no right to call for the property of individuals, or, what is exactly the same thing, to restrict the uses of that property, for the sake of the public good. The natural limit of the discretionary right over property, is only that it be not employed to the detriment of others; and the most extended claims of government, with regard to it, rest on the suppositions, that the object, which is desirable to all, cannot be attained by individual exertion, and

that the benefit accruing to each contributor will be a full equivalent for his contribution. If the object be distant and indirect, if the advantage be chiefly to other classes than the contributors, if the burden fall altogether on a few, whose loss is certain, while the public benefit in which they may share is problematical, the rights of government over property cannot be extended so far, without removing all those barriers which justice interposes against oppression.

In truth, however, sumptuary laws can scarcely be so framed as to become any grievous restriction on the enjoyment of wealth. If they extend merely to that expenditure which meets the public eye; to the painting or gilding of a carriage, the number of horses by which it is drawn, or the number of servants by whom it is attended; to richness of liveries, the exterior decorations of the palace, or the dress worn in the streets; such regulations are evidently nugatory, varying the direction, without diminishing either the amount or the ostentation of expense. Luxury will soon find other means of attracting notice; it will appear in the decorations of apartments, in furniture, in entertainments, in gaming, in rare and costly gratifications, which, by marking superior wealth, will occasion the same envy, the same profusion, and the same rapacity. In vain would you attempt to set bounds to fashion and caprice by a multitude of sumptuary edicts.

As you extend your prohibitions, embroidery would be substituted for jewels, laces for embroidery, cameos or mosaic for ornaments of gold or steel. When all the resources of dress were exhausted, new edicts must be framed against mirrors, marbles, and gilding in the apartments, foreign luxuries on the table, foreign wines on the side-board, paintings and statuary, music and theatrical representations; in short, against whatever might be provided as a display of ostentatious wealth.

Such laws, though liable to constant evasion, might occasionally become engines of oppression. Without inquisitorial powers lodged in the magistrate, they would be entirely inefficacious, and, joined to such powers, they might be dangerous to liberty. However high the penalty might be for transgression, the frequency of its infliction would not be such as to ensure obedience; on the contrary, the danger of forbidden luxuries would only enhance their value in the eye of fashion, and a total disregard of the law, when characteristic of wealth, would cease to be a crime. The restrictive edicts, in ordinary cases, would remain without force; but they would sometimes afford grounds for prosecutions, originating in political animosity or private revenge. Occasional informations, even though of rare occurrence, would banish confidence from society, and diffuse a general feeling of uneasy suspi-

cion. A servant, bribed by an enemy, provoked by ill treatment, or instigated by malice, would sometimes betray his master; and the dread of this kind of revenge would ensure acquiescence in the neglects, submission to the insolence, and even impunity to the dishonesty, of domestics. Little, if any, progress would be made in checking inequality of property, or any of those evils which it brings in its train; but every comfort and security of private life, and all independence of mind, would be destroyed in the attempt.

If it were possible that sumptuary laws could be effectual, evils of a different nature would spring from their enactment. There would be little inducement to acquire wealth which was permitted neither to add to the comforts of its proprietor, nor to procure him that general notice, deference, and admiration, which are so flattering to the vanity of man. A certain degree of riches would still be desirable, because, in this degree they were allowed to contribute to the welfare of the individual in whatever manner he was inclined. To this extent, natural indolence would, as at present, be counteracted by ambition. But as a man approached to that wealth which enabled him to command all permitted enjoyments, his inducements to exertion would gradually relax, till at last they ceased to influence his mind. That torpor, which is the greatest curse of affluence, would prevail

over a much larger portion of the inhabitants, and would be more apt, by imitation, to descend to the body of the people. No great capitals would be accumulated, no great mercantile establishments formed; the division of labour, consequently, could not be carried to its full extent, very expensive machinery could not be erected, and all commercial enterprize would be dreaded by those, who, having nearly reached the limits of wealth indirectly prescribed by law, had much to lose, and no important object to attain.

The want of demand at home, would, at the same time, discourage the finer manufactures, which, independently of this demand, can scarcely be established, merely for the supply of a foreign market. The same prohibition of luxuries would necessarily reduce the amount and value of the articles imported, and this again would limit the exportation of every kind of rude produce and manufacture, by rendering it difficult for the merchants to procure profitable returns. The employments of capital and industry would, thus, be circumscribed; the rates both of wages and profit would be depressed; and, the annual revenue of the inhabitants being diminished, while the motives to accumulation were weakened, national wealth and population, if they did not actually decline, would be checked in their advancement. In endeavouring to guard against the profusion incident to excessive inequality,

we should have adopted a measure more hostile, than any profusion, to the progresss of wealth, and at the same time, highly detrimental to that vigour and energy of mind, which are the best and most abundant sources of happiness to the individual, and of prosperity to the state.

SECTION IV.

Of Regulations tending to restrict Inequality of Property.

Having found that the evils arising from excessive inequality, however great, would be far surpassed by those which must spring from any violation of the right of property, and that sumptuary laws, though powerful as an instrument of oppression, and apt to occasion vexatious interference with the internal economy of families, must be altogether impotent in checking the progress of luxury in an opulent nation, ought we here to stop our enquiries, acquiescing in what appears to be the least of two evils? Ought we not, on the contrary, to use every endeavour to restrict what we cannot altogether pre-

vent? Although we cannot abolish great inequality, it is possible that we may diminish the frequency of excessive accumulation; although we cannot extract the poison, perhaps, by judicious applications, we may mitigate its virulence. "Cest precisement," says Rousseau,* "parce-"que la force des choses tend toujours á de-"truire l'egalitè, que la force de la legislation "doit toujours tendre á la maintenir."

The tendency of legislation, however, has, in some instances, been directly to increase that inequality, the natural progress of which, in as far as consistent with justice, ought to have been repressed.† This, in particular, has been the case with regard to the rules of succession, the extent to which testamentary bequests have been supported, and the mode in which the public revenue has been levied from the several classes of the inhabitants. If in these points the laws have been at once unjust and inexpedient, their alteration may, in some measure, restrict that inequality of property which their enactment has hitherto helped to extend.

I. There is a time at which all connection between an individual and his possessions entirely

* Du Contrat Social, Livre II. Chap. XI.

† Partout elles (les Loix) out favorisé l'inegalitè des fortunes qui plonge une petite partie des citoyens dans la corruption, pour condamner les restes à l'avilissement, et la misere.—*Condorcet, Vie de Turgot.*

ceases; at which all his rights are completely at an end; and his effects pass to others, who enjoy the same power over them which he formerly exercised. If no successor were pointed out by natural feelings, or by positive law, his possessions would be considered as unappropriated, and therefore open to the first occupant. In no country, however, whose history has reached us, has this idea been entertained. There is no interval during which the effects of the deceased can be considered as common to all, but the extinction of the right of property in one person is universally the commencement of a similar right in another.

This right of succession has been held by many authors to arise altogether from the positive regulations of society, and consequently it has been asserted, that whatever rules may be established, as they have been enacted or permitted by that legislature, whose province it is to decide on what is most expedient for the nation, they become, from that circumstance alone, perfectly just.* This opinion, though employed to palliate the obvious iniquity of some existing regulations, would be extremely convenient to the reformer. When he had proved the inexpediency of the present laws of succession; when he had shown, as is indeed abundantly obvious, that they are favour-

* Blackst. Comm. Book II. Chap. I.

able to inequality, and consequently chargeable with all those evils which are its undeniable results; he would draw his conclusion, that they ought instantly to be altered; nor could his opponents deny, that, by the same power which had a right to enact a law, that law might be abrogated. In this manner might he contend, that any rule of succession which favoured equality, without discouraging industry, was as just as it was expedient.

But the most cursory view of human laws must convince us, that the rules of succession, however they may vary in less material circumstances, all agree in this, that the effects of the deceased pass to those with whom he is supposed to have been most intimately connected when alive. Such a coincidence can scarcely arise from investigations and inferences respecting the general good of society. It is much more likely to proceed from more obvious considerations; from those principles of natural law, which, imprinted on the human heart, may be obscured, but can scarcely be altogether obliterated, by the passions, prejudices, and follies of man.

In rude ages, property is held in common by all the members of a family, and the head of the family is nothing more than the administrator. When the father dies, the eldest of the family succeeds to the administration, but the right of property is conceived to remain, as formerly,

vested in the whole.* Accordingly, in the early law of many nations, we find that children who have left their father's house, and whose use of the common property has consequently been relinquished, have no part of the succession; while strangers, if brought into the family by adoption, succeed along with the natural descendants. While such ideas prevail, there is not properly any transference of possessions by death; the rights already existing are continued, notwithstanding the demise of one of the joint proprietors; but no new right is begun.

In civilized countries, where alienation is common, and other acts of uncontrouled power over property are daily practised by the head of the family, the idea of joint possession is lost; and the father being looked upon as the sole proprietor, each succession is considered as the commencement, not the continuation, of a right. But this change is brought about very gradually; and the rule of members of a family, that is, in ordinary cases, nearest relations, inheriting the property of the deceased, is continued, without enquiry into its origin, as an established custom.

The rule, thus introduced, is supported by many natural feelings. In most instances, the near relations, having been partly maintained by the funds of the deceased, would be materially

* See Kames's Historical Law Tracts, Tract III.

impoverished if his property were to pass to strangers. Their situation is, in this respect, different from that of others. By their succession no person is injured in his circumstances, or circumscribed in his enjoyments; but if they were to be cut off from the inheritance, their comforts would at any rate be abridged, and perhaps their means of subsistence might be altogether withdrawn. They have also been much connected with the deceased, they have been in the habit of interchanging with him many offices of kindness, of having common interests, common friends, and common enemies. By these connections, they have become so strongly associated with him in the minds of the neighbours, that the transfer of the property to them seems a less violent change, than if it were to devolve to others. To this we may add, that, being usually around his death-bed, they have it in their power to begin their possession immediately after his decease, even before that event can be known to other persons who might wish to seize on the inheritance.

From all these circumstances, it becomes customary for the nearest relations to succeed, as a matter of course, if not always as a matter of strict right; and the longer this rule is continued, the firmer is its justice established in the apprehensions of mankind. That which, in a great variety of instances, has been supported by many

sympathies and associations, at last acquires the authority of a general rule, without any examination of the particular circumstances of the case; and it is sometimes adhered to even in opposition to sympathies very similar to those by which the previous decisions had been guided. When it is known that the nearest relations have been unconnected with the deceased, when they have had no dependence on his property, when they have been at enmity with him; even in such cases, that line of succession is adhered to which the usual connection between near relations had introduced.

The established rules of succession are still further supported, at least in civilized nations, by those considerations of public utility from which some authors have deduced their origin. Nothing could be more inconvenient, or could cause such disorders in society, as laying successions open to the first occupant; and it is, perhaps, impossible to devise any rule of such simple and universal application, as that founded on consanguinity, which is, in most cases, strengthened by many natural feelings, and in all, seems consecrated by immemorial custom.*

That the property of the deceased should descend to his nearest relations, seems therefore

* I must again express my obligations to Professor Millar's Lectures on Jurisprudence.

to be a rule of law strongly recommended by its conformity to natural feelings, and to the general good of the inhabitants. It is founded on principles, not indeed so clear and explicit, but very similar in many respects to those by which the right of property itself is protected. Particular circumstances, however, have introduced irregularities into the codes of many nations, and in part set aside those rules which the great original principle of succession would suggest. It cannot surely be considered as any deviation from justice, or even as any very hazardous experiment, to correct such of those irregularities as seem to be sanctioned by no important considerations of utility, and thus to bring back the laws to the general feelings of mankind. If by doing so, we shall at the same time diminish that inequality of property, which has, in some measure, grown out of our institutions, the correction of our code will be no less expedient, than it is just.

The laws of primogeniture, and the postponement of females to males, form the most important exceptions to the natural rules of succession according to consanguinity. They naturally take place in that rude and disorderly state of society, in which each tribe, being engaged in petty warfare with its neighbours, requires a military chief to lead his relations and dependants to battle; in which each proprietor may be considered as

an independent prince, and the division of the estate might expose the whole family to the malice and injustice of inveterate and rapacious foes. So far the introduction of the law may be satisfactorily accounted for; and lawyers, when they can point out the circumstances in which a rule has originated, are apt to think that they have proved it to be just. That the eldest son should inherit the whole estate is now, however, as unnecessary for the purposes of defence, as it is palpably unjust; and the circumstances of the country being entirely altered, the law of succession, unless it can be defended on other grounds, should be adapted to the present, not to the past, condition of the inhabitants.

No reason can now be assigned why the eldest son should succeed to a greater portion than his brothers and sisters; far less why he should entirely exclude them from the inheritance of lands. The relation which all the children bear to their father is the same; the share which they possess in his affections, except in so far as this is altered by the circumstance of one of them being looked upon as the future representative of the family, is also equal; they have all derived their support from his property during his life; and after his decease, the youngest and the females are at least as unable to provide for themselves, as the older and the males. There does not seem to be a single natural sentiment on which

the preferences created by the present laws of succession can be supported; but the consequence of a family would be annihilated by the partition of the estate, and family pride is more powerful than reason and affection.

The tendency of the law of primogeniture to encourage and perpetuate inequality of property, which is its only recommendation to the great and powerful, is the strongest argument for its instant abolition. While it puts one member of a family into a situation unfavourable for happiness and destructive of energy of mind, it accumulates immense estates, which, being imperfectly cultivated, are in some degree lost to production; it deprives the younger children of that capital which is requisite to their success in commerce; it gives them a taste for expenses which soon reduce them to beggary; and, by instilling into them early prejudices against the useful professions, it almost precludes the means of their becoming respectable members of society. "It "tends not," says Harrington, "to the improve- "ment of merchandize, that there be some who "have no need of their trading, and others who "are not able to follow it." *

Nor are these the only evils of the law of primogeniture; it loosens all the bonds of family attachment, and, in place of the sentiment of bro-

* Oceana, XIII. Order.

therly affection, which, to exist, must be equal and reciprocal, it substitutes haughty protection on the one part, and slavish dependence on the other. If the younger sons have too much spirit to brook this condition, they are obliged to live in a style so inferior to that of their brother; their acquaintances, pursuits, and amusements are necessarily so different; that their intercourse with him is gradually reduced to ceremonious visits, if a complete estrangement do not ensue. The situation of the daughters is still more uncomfortable. Educated in all the indulgences which their father's fortune could command, and in all the splendour attendant on his rank, they are suddenly reduced by his death to a penury which, although unfitted to support, they are prevented, by the established maxims of the world, from attempting, through their own exertions, to relieve. They are put into the situation of dependants, possessed of vague and ill-defined claims on their brother. When his own family grow up, his opinion of the allowance he can afford them becomes different from their expectations, and inadequate to their rank; and grudgings, envyings, and disputes are often the result. Thus are the best feelings of the heart sacrificed to a false show, a contemptible vanity.*

* "And truly, when I consider that our countrymen are "none of the worst natured, I must confess I marvel much "how it comes to pass, that we should use our children as

In several countries, some relief is given to the younger children, by dividing among them, to the exclusion of the elder brother, the moveable property of their father; but it is seldom that the debts of a great landholder do not absorb all the property of other descriptions which he possesses. At any rate, this is only an occasional and a very partial remedy for a great systematic injustice.

The total exclusion of relations by half-blood, in the English law, is a hardship for which the ingenuity of lawyers has failed in discovering any plausible pretext. * Nor is the preference of *Agnati*, or relations by the father, to *Cognati*, or relations by the mother, less objectionable. Being founded on no natural feelings, it is altogether unjust; and having a direct tendency to prevent a wider diffusion of property at the decease of the rich, it is highly impolitic. The complete exclusion by the laws of England of ascendants, of those who have given us birth, who have reared us in infancy, educated us in youth, and laid the foundations of our future welfare, is so pal-

" we do our puppies; take one, lay it in the lap, feed it with " every good bit, and drown five; nay yet worse, for as much " as the puppies are once drowned, whereas the children are " left perpetually drowning. Really it is a flinty custom."

Harrington's Oceana, XIII. Order.

See also Wealth of Nations, Book III. Chap. II.

* See Blackstone's Comm. Book. II. Chap. XIV.

pably iniquitous, that it is unnecessary to point out the sophistry of those arguments by which it has been defended.*

By recurring then to an equal partition of property among all the relations in the nearest degree, and in the case of collaterals, by admitting along with those in the nearest degree (but to a smaller portion of the inheritance) such as are one step farther removed, a method may be discovered, equally simple and effectual, of remedying inequalities, not founded in nature, but arising from the defective provisions of our laws. Fortunes, accumulated by superior industry and economy, would in general be broken down into smaller portions, at the death of their proprietors; and while sufficient inequalities would still remain to stimulate ambition, the capital of the nation, divided into innumerable vivifying rills, each superintended and directed with the utmost care, would adorn, enrich, and fertilize the country.

There is, indeed, a limit to the division of land which cannot be exceeded without injuring cultivation. Unless a property be of sufficient extent to employ a farmer with his cattle and implements of agriculture, there must be a very

* "Descendit itaque Jus," say Bracton and Coke, "quasi ponderosum quid cadens deorsum recta linea, et numquam reascendit."

Blackstone's argument, though less simple, is scarcely more conclusive.

considerable loss of labour and of time. But there is no reason to suspect that a smaller property than this would ever be retained. The present disinclination to dispose of land arises entirely from the superior respect attached to its possession, which, originating in feudal times, has probably been perpetuated by the law of primogeniture. Abolish all distinctions of rank founded on the possession of landed estates, and the convenience of individuals will arrange this property, like every other, in the manner most conducive to the interests of society.

II. The right of devising property by testament, seems to have little foundation in natural justice. When a man dies, his dominion over external objects is completely at an end; the connection between him and his property is dissolved, and his rights of every kind extinguished. In opposition, however, to the obvious dictates of reason, the power of bequeathing by will continues the rights of a proprietor after he himself has ceased to exist, allows him to alienate after he is incapable of performing any action whatever, and prefers to those rights, which, according to natural law, are immediately vested in his nearest relations, an imaginary dominion exercised by the deceased proprietor. When the connection between a person and the things of this world no longer exists, the rights founded on this connection must also cease. "On ne peut

" regarder le droit de tester, c' est à dire d' avoir " une volontè toujours revocable, de disposer de " ce qu' on possede au moment où on cesse de " le posseder, comme une suite de la proprietè."*

But although the right of property cannot exist after death, it remains entire till that period. When a man feels his approaching dissolution, he has it in his power to give the possession of his whole property, or of any part of it, to whomever he may wish to favour; and he may stipulate with that person, that, in case of his recovery, it shall again be restored to him. Even if this condition were not so formally announced as to create a strict legal obligation, a refusal to redeliver the property would appear one of the most aggravated instances of ingratitude; and mankind would explain the circumstances of the transaction in such a manner, as would prevent the kindness which the one party had expressed towards the other, from being made the instrument of his own impoverishment. It is to such donations, in the contemplation of death, expressing or implying a right of revocation, that we must ascribe the power, now recognised in the laws of the greater part of modern Europe, of bequeathing property by will. In examining, however, the institutions of different nations respecting the existence and extent of this power, we do not find the same agreement as in the rules

* Vie de Turgot par Condorcet.

of natural succession. The differences which may be remarked are fundamental; testaments being supported in some countries, and altogether disregarded in others.

By the Gentoo laws, so far from any testament being permitted, no man is allowed, even during his life, to divide his property unequally among his children; "but if any of the sons hath been "particularly dutiful to his father, or hath a very "large family, or is incapable of getting his own "living; upon these three accounts, if he gives "a larger share to such sons than the rest, he "hath authority for so doing."* The idea of common property between the members of a family, it would appear from this law, is still entertained.

In many parts of Greece, testaments were never authorised. They were first introduced at Athens by the laws of Solon; being permitted, however, only to such as, having no children,† adopted those strangers whom they called to their inheritance.‡ Lycurgus is censured by Aristotle for setting no bounds to the accumulation of property by gifts and testaments,§ and though the regulation by which wills were permitted, has been ascribed by other authors to Epitades,‖ it has

* Code of Gentoo Laws, Chap. II. Sec. X.

† Plutarch's Life of Solon.

‡ Introduction au Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis.

§ See Gillies' translation of the Politics, Book II. Chap. VII.

‖ Plutarch's Life of Lycurgus.

been universally considered as the chief cause of the decline of Sparta.

In Rome previously to the laws of the twelve tables, property could be devised only by a law passed for each particular case. Afterwards a fictitious sale, in presence of five persons, representing the five principal tribes, was substituted for a specific enactment; and this, called *testamentum per aes et libram*, was probably the only mode supported by law during the republic.* In extraordinary cases, indeed, such as in the field of battle, more simple forms were admitted.

Among the northern nations that overran the Roman empire, testaments were entirely unknown,† and some traces of the mode in which wills were afterwards introduced (although the superior attainments of the conquered people must have had a very powerful effect in assimilating the laws of their conquerors to the Roman jurisprudence,) are still discernible in the institutions of their descendants.

In Scotland, land cannot, at this moment, be bequeathed by will, although the same effect is produced by a pretended alienation during life, reserving to the former possessor a life-rent and a power of recall;‡ nor has the testator a com-

* Hein. Inst. lib. II. Tit. X. Gibbon's Hist. Chap LIV. Esprit des Lois, Chap. XXVII.

† Blackst. Comm. Book II. Chap. XXXII.

‡ Erskine's Inst. Book III. Tit. IX. Sec. XV.

plete power even over his moveable property, unless he die without leaving either a wife or children.*

The ancient law of England was similar to that of Scotland. "In general no will was permitted "of lands till the reign of Henry VIII.; and then "only for a certain portion. For it was not till "after the Restoration, that the power of devising "real property became so universal as at present."† The power of bequeathing moveables was also restricted, as in Scotland, to a third; the portions of wife and children being called their *reasonable parts*. This remained the common law of England in the reign of Charles I.; but having been gradually infringed, it subsisted, at the time of the Revolution, only in the province of York, the principality of Wales, and the city of London. It was not finally abolished, and the power of making testaments fully recognised, but by statutes of William and Mary, and of George I.‡

"This variety, then," to use the words of Sir William Blackstone,§ "may serve to evince, "that the right of making wills, and disposing "of property after death, is merely a creature of "the civil state, which has permitted it in some "countries and denied it in others."

* Ersk. Inst. Book III. Tit. VIII. Sec. XX.
† Blackst. Comm. Book II. Chap. I.
‡ Ibid. Book II. Chap. XXXII.
§ Ibid. Book II. Chap. XXXII.

Having thus shown that testaments are not supported by the natural feelings of justice, it remains to enquire how far they may be conducive to the general good.

The remark which first presents itself, and which perhaps ought to be decisive of the question, is, that they are among the most frequent and most powerful causes of inequality of property. He who has amassed a large fortune, often becomes desirous of being the founder of a great family. In pursuance of this desire, he singles out one of his children, of his relations, or friends, and, leaving to him all the wealth which he has accumulated, cuts off his other heirs from his inheritance. His vanity is flattered by viewing himself as the source of future splendour, the fountain from which the stream of future grandeur is destined to flow; he enjoys, by anticipation, the respect and gratitude which he foolishly imagines his successors will pay to his memory; he even attaches in idea to his own person that admiration which is excited by magnificence, but which never extends beyond the immediate possessor of wealth. It is to such childish vanities, that he sacrifices paternal tenderness, attachment to his other relations, the interests even of those whom he loves.

Some are induced to leave their whole property to one person, disappointing the natural expectation of their heirs, not by family pride,

but by a fond attachment to an individual. It will seldom, however, be found that testaments of this kind are made in favour of the most needy or most deserving. Such partiality, often arising from accident, or from unreasonable prepossessions, is nourished, by pliancy of sentiment, or by unworthy dissimulation; not unfrequently it is the fruit of slight attentions received from the great and powerful, whose notice, being more flattering to vanity, too often makes a deeper impression on the heart, than the most affectionate attachment of the poor. This occasional gratification of vanity outweighs, in the minds of a great part of mankind, valuable services and years of unremitted attention: and thus testaments often swell the amount of those enormous fortunes, which, for the good of mankind, ought to be decreased.

The experience of Holland, where the power of making unequal divisions of property by will was so seldom exercised, that it might almost be considered as virtually abolished, may obviate the objection usually urged against the restriction of testamentary bequests, that it would diminish the inducement to industry and economy. It may happen, in very rare instances, that the desire of raising up a family becomes the motive to accumulation; but in general it is rather the consequence of the acquisition of wealth, or a motive suggested by self-deception, to hide the

deformity of avarice. A man exerts his industry in early life, in order to procure the objects of his immediate wants; he afterwards practises economy, that he may provide for his future comfort, and be prepared against the vicissitudes of life; when he has attained these purposes, he perseveres from the desire of consideration and respect; and at last he becomes a miser from long-continued habits of parsimony, without having any well-defined object in amassing wealth. These motives would still prompt sufficiently to exertion, to prudence, and to economy, although they were not strengthened by a foolish vanity, which, when it does exist, is apt to lead to the most degrading avarice. It is seldom he, who, born to moderate opulence, might have entertained a reasonable expectation of enriching his posterity, that becomes the founder of a family; but the man who has struggled with hardships in his youth, who has long been under the necessity of practising the most rigid self-denial, and who, after having amassed riches, can no longer discard those penurious habits which arose from his original indigence. Should his intended heir be cut off, he will still continue his way of life, and at last leave his wealth to some person with whom he had little connection while alive, or to a public charity in which he had never shown any interest. His conduct, though perhaps un-

known to himself, had been influenced, not by vanity, but by the most sordid avarice.

The total abolition of testaments, however, would be attended with several inconveniences. Some members of a family may be incapacitated by the state of their health from providing for themselves; and females are precluded from many lucrative employments, by the want of physical power, and from others, by the opinions and established customs of society. In such circumstances, an unequal division of property may be the only means of maintaining the several members of a family in the same rank of life, and the degree in which this inequality of partition is requisite can be better determined by the father, than by any general law. Every man, too, must be sensible of great difference in the treatment which he receives from his relations; and while it is a virtuous satisfaction to leave some token of gratitude to those who have shown him kindness, the power of disinheriting may command attentions from such as might otherwise be inclined to treat him with disrespect.

These views are so important, that, if the public feeling had not been corrupted by the establishment of the right of primogeniture, it probably would be most conducive to the general good to allow property to be devised by will. But where the law has for ages given an unjust preference to the first-born, and to males over

females, and where the desire of raising and perpetuating a family has, in consequence, become one of the strongest and most prevalent of passions, the unlimited power of making a testament furnishes an easy and obvious mode of disappointing the intentions of a more equitable regulation. By restricting, however, in place of altogether abolishing, this power, almost every useful object might be attained.

It might be allowed to a father to alter the legal division of his property in favour of a son who was unable, from bodily or mental infirmity, to provide for himself, and in favour of his female descendants. It ought also to be in his power to restrict to a life-interest the provisions for any of his children, whom he might consider as unfit to manage property, reserving the property itself to the natural heirs of those children. Such powers, to be effectual, must be unlimited; but they could not be rendered the instrument of re-establishing, in an indirect manner, the right of primogeniture which had been abolished.

To provide for the requital of kindness, it might be sufficient to permit one-third of his property to be at the unlimited disposal of a man who was childless, and one-sixth at the disposal of him who left descendants. The proper return for kindness is not of a pecuniary nature, but consists in reciprocal kindness, in friendship, and in gratitude. Such attentions as arise from

the expectation of repayment in money deserve no recompence beyond a just indemnification for the time and labour; and, for that kindness which has proceeded from better motives, whatever shows a grateful sense of obligation will be an ample reward.

But with respect to the punishment of neglect or ill usage, greater powers must be permitted. It is not sufficient that a testator should mark his disapprobation of such conduct; he ought also to be enabled effectually to punish it. For this purpose, he ought to be allowed to diminish the portion of any of his heirs by will, and even to exclude him entirely from the inheritance. Nor is there any danger of this power being abused in order to produce inequality of property; for an exclusion, which necessarily implied some delinquency, would never be resorted to, but in cases where it was justified by past misconduct. No testator could deliberately, and in the eye of the world, incur the guilt of injuring the character of a relation who had but slightly offended him, for the express purpose of depriving him of property, to which, unless forfeited by misbehaviour, he had a legal right.

The laws of several countries, in place of restricting the power of making testaments, have extended it to a degree inconsistent both with reason and with the fundamental principles of jurisprudence. Not satisfied with directing the

succession to lands after their decease, proprietors have aimed at perpetuating their dominion, by preventing their successors from alienating the estate, or from changing any part of a long line of succession which they chose to appoint. Nothing can be more absurd than such entails. The dead cannot for ever retain rights to the prejudice of the living. The former generation had the free disposal of their property while they remained in this world, and the same rights, after their decease, must descend to their heirs. Whatever title, therefore, a proprietor might have to establish an entail, the same title must devolve to his successor, in whom the right of property is as completely vested, to alter or abrogate his disposition.

An entail, at the same time, is attended with many disadvantages to individuals and to the state. It destroys the salutary authority of a father over his children, by preventing him from punishing the misconduct of his oldest son, and from rewarding the virtues of the rest of his family; it establishes a difference of rank and of wealth, which, in many instances, must be fatal to brotherly affection; it hinders the daughters from being provided for in a manner suitable to their education and habits, and the younger sons from being put into a situation to provide for themselves; it is unfavourable to cultivation, by rendering the possessor of an estate a usufructuary, by preventing him from dispo-

sing of part that he may improve the rest, and by inducing him to extort, under the name of fine, a portion of the farmer's capital; it withdraws land from the commerce of society, diminishing, in some degree, the uses of wealth;* by producing an extent of credit proportioned rather to income, than to real wealth, it is a fertile source, at the death of each proprietor, of distress and bankruptcy; and, to sum up all, it is a powerful engine for supporting inequality of property.†

III. That the proportion which the taxes bear to the property of each contributor ought to increase progressively, according to the amount of his property, is a principle which has been laid down by several authors, ‡ and partially admitted

* "In Scotland more than one-fifth, perhaps more than "one-third, part of the whole lands of the country are at pre-"sent supposed to be under strict entail."

Wealth of Nations, Book III. Chap. II.

Since Dr Smith wrote, this evil has greatly increased.

† "Entails are still respected through the greater part of "Europe, in those countries particularly in which noble birth "is a necessary qualification for the enjoyment either of civil "or military honours. Entails are thought necessary for "maintaining this exclusive privilege of the nobility to the "great offices and honours of their country; and that order "having usurped one unjust advantage over the rest of their "fellow-citizens, lest their poverty should render it ridiculous, "it is thought reasonable that they should have another."

Wealth of Nations, Book III. Chap. II.

‡ See L'Esprit des Lois, Liv. XIII. Chap. VII. Kames' Sketches of the History of Man, Book II. Sketch VIII, Sec. V.

by many legislators; but no where has it been fully adopted in practice. In some nations, the poor have been in a great measure exempted, only to lay the heavier burden on the middle ranks; in others, the chief privilege and distinction of nobility has been to contribute nothing directly to the exigencies of the state. After having enumerated the evils arising from excessive inequality of property, it would be superfluous to prove that a system by which that inequality is encouraged must be inexpedient; but it may be of some importance to show that it is also unjust.

The taxes which each inhabitant pays to the state consist of the quantity of enjoyment of which he is deprived. The superintendence of government secures to him all his property, and enables him to follow out in quiet such measures as he thinks calculated to increase his comforts. In return, it is requisite that he should yield part of his enjoyments to the public exigencies: and it seems reasonable that the portion so yielded by individuals should correspond to that which they respectively retain. Society may be viewed as a great commercial concern, in which the in-put stock ought to be proportioned to the share of profits accruing to each of the partners. The money paid into the treasury is merely a mode of estimating the quantity of enjoyments contributed by each: and if, in the different conditions of life, the same quantity of the preci-

ous metals represents very different quantities of enjoyment, this ought to be attended to in apportioning the public burdens. Should so material a consideration be disregarded, our taxes, though nominally equal, must in reality be unjust. One man will receive the greatest benefits from society, without being subjected to a proportional burden, while another, in attaining advantages comparatively insignificant, will be obliged to submit to very grievous privations. Thus, if a man possessed of a hundred a year pay ten pounds to the state, he is deprived of a much more essential part of his comforts, than another who, possessed of a thousand a year, pays a hundred, and still more than the proprietor of a revenue of twenty thousand pounds, who contributes two thousand. The first will perceive a very considerable diminution of the enjoyments which he could formerly command; the second will also experience some inconvenience from the tax; by the third the alteration will be nearly unfelt. While the one has been subjected to real hardships, in order to secure his hundred pounds from the injustice of mankind, the other is protected in the enjoyment of a revenue of two hundred times the amount, without being forced to abandon his most capricious indulgences. Even on a cursory view, the injustice of such a partition of the public burdens is indisputable; but it will appear still

more clearly, by a more particular consideration of the effects of taxation on the several ranks of society.

All our enjoyments may be divided into three classes, necessaries, gratifications, and superfluities. These classes glide into each other, so that it is impossible to draw any exact line of demarcation; but there are also certain differences, by which, in a general way, they may be distinguished.

Under necessaries may be included whatever is requisite to the existence and full developement of the powers of man; whatever conduces to the growth and nourishment of his body, or the due expansion of the faculties of his mind; whatever is useful in enabling him to reach his full maturity and continue his species. Taxes, by which the funds allotted to this class of expenses are affected, must occasion great distress, cramping the powers and energies of man, and, if pushed far, even putting a period to his existence.

The second class may comprehend all conveniences, comforts, and real luxuries, whatever is requisite or useful, not to the being, but to the well-being, of man; whatever is fitted, by its own qualities, to give pleasure to his senses, or bring delight to his mind. This is a most extensive class of enjoyments, reaching from the simplest pleasures to the most refined delicacies, contri-

ved by human ingenuity, or collected by human labour. To be deprived of any of these is an evil, for they all contribute, in the opinion of their possessors, to happiness. But they are not all of equal importance. The privation of an indulgence will be more or less severely felt, according as it approaches to, or recedes from, the class of necessaries; according as it contributes to the real well-being, or merely administers to a capricious desire.

Under the head of superfluities, may be ranked whatever is valued solely as a proof of wealth; such things as are of themselves fitted to produce neither pleasure nor happiness; such as delight none of the senses, as neither improve, adorn, nor even occupy the mind; but which, being unattainable by men of moderate fortune, serve to distinguish the opulent, and to attract admiration. To be deprived of those superfluities is merely to lose the admiration which they excited, to part with some of the conspicuous testimonies of elevated rank. But the rank which any person holds is relative to that of those on the same level with himself, or at least of those who are nearly on that level. He, who remains stationary, feels degraded, if many of his former equals become his superiors; and elevated, if they fall below him: but the person who retains the same rank relatively to those around him, is affected neither by an increase nor diminution of

superfluities, if it be common to all his acquaintances. To part with those distinctions of rank is very different from the loss of gratifications, which, however trifling, always add something to enjoyment. If our superiors, equals, and immediate inferiors, are proportionally reduced, we find ourselves exactly in our former stations, and the loss of superfluities no longer requisite to our rank can scarcely be called a privation.

The whole, or nearly the whole, of the incomes of workmen, and of small tradesmen and farmers, is expended on the necessaries of life. Finding it sufficiently difficult to maintain their families, they have little surplus for the gratification of less urgent demands; and if they are highly taxed, they are made to pay a most exorbitant price for the comparatively small degree of protection which they derive from government.

He whose revenue is more than requisite to procure the necessaries of life, expends what remains on comforts and enjoyments. If this surplus be small, he is anxious to draw from it all the gratification it can afford, and is therefore careful to lay it out on such articles of food, clothing, and lodging, as will contribute most to his well-being. As his income increases, he indulges in other expenses less essential to his ease or pleasure, and at last, all real enjoyments being exhausted, he betakes himself to capricious

desires, to refined, and sometimes imaginary, gratifications. In this progress, the advantages which he derives from government are always increasing, and the price which he pays for these advantages is always diminishing. When he is forced to abandon real and substantial pleasures, he is subjected to a serious hardship; but when he merely relinquishes those which are the vain progeny of caprice, he is protected in the enjoyment of all the necessaries, and most of the comforts and luxuries, of life, in return for the sacrifice of trifles unessential to his happiness.

But there is a point at which the most refined indulgences must end, the rest of every splendid revenue being necessarily absorbed by those superfluities which are subservient merely to show and ostentation. It may be difficult to point out the boundary, for many of our real enjoyments are enhanced by the admiration which they excite; but the distinction is not on that account less real. A few servants may be kept, partly for convenience, and partly for show, but a large establishment brings nothing but vexation, and can be endured only as the means of attracting the regards of the world. The person who is forced to part with only such superfluities is secured in the possession of all the necessaries, all the comforts, and all the luxuries of life, in return for the relinquishment of follies which vex him, and which, all his acquaintances being

equally brought down, are no longer necessary to his dignity and rank.

Independently, then, of any additional public expenditure arising from the unequal distribution of property, we are warranted to conclude, from the manner in which the several classes of the inhabitants are affected by taxes, that the proportion of the public burdens laid on each individual ought to increase, in a quick progression, according to his wealth. Of the public charges, however, some are greatly enhanced by excessive inequality, and others may be traced to it as their original source.

Among the various branches of public expenditure, war, and the preparations for war, certainly occupy the first place. Not only is the state put to an enormous expense during the continuation of hostilities; but, even during peace, armies must be disciplined, fortifications erected, navies built and repaired, and ambassadors sent to every neighbouring, and even to the most distant, nations, to give instant information of intrigues that may threaten to disturb the general tranquillity. Part of these expenses would be unavoidable, in whatever manner wealth were distributed among the inhabitants of the state; but part also arises from excessive inequality.

Although an opulent nation might hold out an equal temptation to the attacks of her neigh-

bours, whether her riches were in the hands of many or of few, her condition for defence, by which this temptation might be counteracted, must, in the two cases, be widely different. When property is engrossed by a few, there are but few deeply interested in the national defence; the rest, having little to lose by being conquered, are prepared to submit quietly to a powerful invader. The rich, educated amidst every indulgence, are ill qualified to endure the fatigues and privations of war; and the poor are sunk, by ignorance and its inseparable vices, to that degree of depravity which extinguishes every generous feeling, and almost justifies the contempt with which they are treated. By excessive inequality, while the numbers of the very rich and the very poor are increased, those of the middle classes are reduced; yet it is chiefly to the middling ranks that we must look for citizens, whose patriotism is founded on a feeling of the happiness which they enjoy, whose ardour of mind is kept alive by their exertions to better their condition, whose bodies are strengthened by moderate exercise, and not enervated by luxury or sloth. A nation in which this invaluable class is diminished, to swell the number of the great and of the destitute, becomes an easy and tempting prey to her more warlike neighbours, and is forced to commit her defence to mercenaries supported at an enormous expense,

and often made the instruments of overturning that freedom which was the origin of her prosperity.

Mercantile disputes, also, which have frequently given occasion to sanguinary and expensive contests, are rendered more frequent by inequality of property. Were riches more equally diffused, no class of the inhabitants could either have an interest in establishing commercial monopolies, or be able successfully to represent their private emolument as the interest of the state. Competition in branches of trade, which, from being carried on by moderate stocks, are accessible to many of the inhabitants of each country, seldom occasions any serious disputes. Each merchant finds the derangement of his trade, during war, too high a price for any advantage which, in the end, he can hope to obtain. Even if a monopoly were established in favour of his country, he is fully aware that the stock of other merchants would be allured from less lucrative employments, and that his profits must speedily be reduced to their former level. Having nothing to gain, and much to lose, by war, in place of advancing contentious, or unjust pretensions, his interest will incline him to every reasonable and candid concession, not inconsistent with the real welfare of his country.

It is otherwise with the great capitalist, who can afford to live a few years on the interest of

his stock, or even to consume part of the stock itself, whenever he has reason to expect his present loss to be compensated by future profits. However great these profits may be, he knows that, if they are drawn from distant speculations which must be carried on by immense capitals, they will not for a considerable time be reduced by competition at home; and he is, therefore, eager to guard, by a monopoly in favour of his country, from that competition which he fears from great capitalists abroad. He becomes tenacious of unjust preferences already established, and indefatigable in his endeavours to create new monopolies no less iniquitous. His supposed knowledge of trade gives weight and currency to his opinions; he succeeds in representing his own interests as those of the state; he employs all his influence with government, takes advantage of national prejudices, and, where nothing is in dispute but private gain, rouses a false sense of national honour. Unmindful of the miseries which he brings upon mankind, he follows his own interests with an eagerness unchecked by humanity; and too often succeeds, by clamour, deception, and intrigue, in plunging his country into war.

In this attempt, he has powerful auxiliaries in the condition of other clases of the inhabitants, who, whatever may be its object, are rendered, by inequality of property, perpetually desirous of

war. All younger sons are disinherited to support the fancied consequence and lazy pride of one of their brothers; from their education, they have imbibed unconquerable prejudices against the useful professions, and in such circumstances the army is their chief resource against that idleness, poverty, and dependence, which seem entailed upon them by the injustice of the law. Those who have been led by a vain emulation of the expenses of their superiors, to squander away their patrimonial fortunes, are in a still more deplorable condition. Too old to begin the study of a profession, too proud to be industrious, too luxurious to live in contented poverty, they have before them a long prospect of misery, embittered by the reflection that it has its source in their own misconduct. To such men, war is an occupation which may relieve their troubled thoughts; it gives them an opportunity of still attracting the regards of mankind; it furnishes a present maintenance, and to a few opens up prospects, not altogether visionary, of re-establishing their bankrupt fortunes.

At the same time, war presents many opportunities of profitable speculation to great capitalists, whose influence must always be powerful in the state. The loans which become necessary yield a large, and almost certain, profit; while the fluctuations in the public funds may be considered as establishing an immense lottery, in which the

valuable prizes are drawn by the fortunate, the intelligent, the artful, and the opulent. Another numerous class of capitalists, employed as commissaries and contractors, partly by a species of monopoly procured by their wealth, and sometimes, it is feared, by expedients which, in other commercial transactions, would stamp their characters with infamy, succeed in rearing their private fortunes on the foundation of national distress.

These different classes, younger brothers and bankrupts, capitalists, stock-jobbers, and contractors, with all their train of dependants, relations, and friends, form a large and powerful body, who have a direct interest in fomenting wars; who languish during the prosperity of their country, and fatten on the miseries of mankind. The friends of peace being disjoined, and reviled as insensible to the glory and honour of their country, the war-faction could be successfully opposed only by pure and disinterested patriotism; but the same inequality of fortune that occasions a love of war, extends corruption through the nation, till public spirit is withered before it. No opposition is therefore made to clamour, which, though in reality excited by self-interest, is cloaked under the specious appearance of public zeal. Suspicions are artfully diffused, trifling injuries are magnified to unpardonable offences, an arrogant tone is adopted in official communi-

cations, and, in consequence of paltry disputes, for which pretences can never be wanting, as many years behold the ravages of war, as smile upon the quiet and blissful arts of peace.

Next to war, the protection of the citizens from the injuries of each other is the chief source of national expense. After having shown that inequality of property generates all kinds of crimes, it is unnecessary to prove that it must increase the expenses attendant on criminal justice. While the careless profusion of the rich opens a thousand doors to cheats, frauds, and pilferings, the poor, devoid of education and of those virtuous feelings which are best founded on knowledge, are tempted, by the desire of vicious indulgences which they cannot otherwise attain, or driven by real distress, to the commission of slight acts of dishonesty, which gradually corrupt their morals and prepare them for crimes. Hence the necessity of farther protections to property; of greater establishments for detecting, trying, and punishing, offenders; hence the multiplication of police and law officers, and the erection of immense jails and bridewells in every corner of the country.

The expenses of general government are no less augmented by inequality of property. In every society it is requisite to have a number of public officers constantly employed in the general management of the affairs of the community.

Their duties consist in the superintendance of inferior officers and magistrates; in proposing and administering such laws as are useful to the country; in regulating the intercourse, whether commercial or political, with foreign nations; and, in general, in preventing whatever public evils may be threatened, and securing whatever public advantages may be attainable. To discharge these important offices with propriety, requires the most powerful talents, knowledge at once comprehensive and minute, the most unwearied attention, and a probity, proof, not only against personal temptations, but also against the cabals and rapacity of those by whom ministers are surrounded. Such an assemblage of the best qualities of the head and heart, when employed in the public service, deserves to be recompensed, in proportion to its rareness and inestimable importance. The charges of general administration, therefore, must always be considerable; but they are greatly augmented by inequality of fortunes.

That ministers may enjoy the general respect which is indispensable to the due discharge of their functions; that men of talents, even though in moderate circumstances, may aspire to the higher offices of the state; and that the more affluent may be indemnified for the attention transferred from their private affairs to those of the public, it is both just and expedient that the emo-

luments of office should be proportioned to the wealth of the higher classes of society. The same salaries which might be sufficient, if riches were more equally distributed, will be contemptible and inadequate in a country where princely fortunes have been accumulated; and every attempt to depress the condition of public functionaries below that of the opulent citizens must either confine the possession of office to those who can defray the necessary expense from their private fortunes, or deprive government of that salutary authority which splendour and magnificence establish in the minds of the people.

It is chiefly, however, by the decay of public spirit, and the prevalence of corruption, that inequality of property swells the expenses of the state. When rapacity prevails generally among the people; when profusion, springing from emulation in splendour, occasions very universal embarrassment; when the younger children, unprovided for by their parents, are dependent on a brother anxious to shift the burden from himself upon the country; when open venality among the higher ranks has abated the abhorrence which corruption is calculated to inspire; in such circumstances, a minister can scarcely remain in office, or execute even those measures which are confessedly beneficial, unless, as it has been emphatically expressed, he grease the wheels of the political machine. For this purpose, pensions are

bestowed, sinecure places are contrived, offices, of which the duty is done by deputy, are multiplied without end; and, that venality may be still farther extended, ingenious modes are devised of granting reversions, and burdening office-bearers with annuities to others. When these measures are taken, the machine of government, meeting with no farther interruption, proceeds over the roughest roads, and even through what appear impervious morasses: but it cannot be denied, by the boldest advocate for corruption, that all this oiling and greasing is with the blood and substance of the people.

Thus, inequality of property swells in many different ways the amount of national expenditure; and it can scarcely be disputed that such additional charges ought to be defrayed by those overgrown fortunes, by which they are occasioned. It is reasonable that all ranks of citizens, according to their ability, should bear a proportion of taxes requisite for the general protection of property; but there is no justice whatever in their being made to contribute to those additional charges, which arise from the immense wealth and pre-eminence of others. When to this we add the other considerations already stated; when we recollect the numerous evils inseparable from excessive inequality; and when we observe that taxes, if proportioned to wealth, occasion more severe privations to the poor than

to the rich; we are warranted in concluding that the proportion which the public burdens bear to the property of each contributor, should increase according to his opulence.

Difficulties, no doubt, will occur in carrying this principle into practice; but a legislator, who kept justice steadily in view, would at least approximate to her paths. How far the taxes now raised in Britain agree with this rule, and how far, in this respect, they would admit of essential improvements, will appear when we come to treat of the several modes of levying, from the people, a revenue for the state.

CHAPTER VI.

Of Legislative Provisions for the Support of the Poor.

In every condition of society, individuals will be found who are unable to provide for their own subsistence. Some are born with defects in their mental powers which preclude foresight and continued attention; others with defects of body which unfit them for every kind of labour; many are maimed by accidents, or weakened by disease; and all, when rendered impotent by age, are liable to outlive those to whose assistance they possess a claim by relationship or former services. To these unavoidable causes of poverty, must be added habits of idleness, of waste, and of debauchery, which, arising from ignorance, weakness of character, and bad example, produce by much the greater part of that misery so generally prevalent in civilized and opulent nations.

The most obvious, and, in the opinion of many respectable authors, the only effectual way of relieving such distress, is by the voluntary contributions of those, who, from living in the neighbour-

hood, may easily make themselves acquainted both with its source and its degree. The burden of maintaining the poor is indeed thus thrown on the benevolent, to the exemption of the selfish and unfeeling; but he who voluntarily submits to expense, has no reason to complain of injustice; nor is the charge thus incurred without a full equivalent. Charity, while purely voluntary, has so ample a reward in self-approbation, that the money distributed for the relief of distress, furnishes more real and permanent enjoyment, than what is expended on any other gratification. It is not, therefore, the humane, though they may regret the selfishness of others, who will object to a charge brought upon them by the exercise of their virtues; but experience will convince them, that, in an extended and corrupt society, their exertions are inadequate to the relief of the complicated misery by which they are surrounded.

Many of those who are willing to contribute to the assistance of the poor, want leisure or patience to investigate the situation of the numerous applicants by whom they are beset. The squalid habitations of the wretched excite disgust; the difficulty of detecting artful imposture is an apology for indolence; and the appearance of extreme wretchedness extorts alms which better information would have withheld. So fair a field being opened for imposture, to beg becomes a trade. Calamities, feigned to excite compas-

sion, are dressed up with every accessory which cunning can suggest, till the unvarnished misery of such as disdain falsehood appears trivial and uninteresting. Those who are not initiated into the miseries of mendicity, have little chance to gain attention, and while the dissolute riot in abundance, the deserving poor are heard with coldness, and left without relief. The frequent detection of fraud and imposition gradually hardens the heart against every tale of distress; the first impression is, that the story is either false or its circumstances exaggerated; and these unavoidable prepossessions, though a very slender protection against the importunities of the profligate, chill and repel the timid and unpractised supplicant.

Charity, the most amiable of the virtues, is thus converted into an encouragement of vice. Many, who might maintain themselves by labour, prefer living on the credulity of mankind; and ingenuity, which, if well directed, might ensure affluence, is employed to extort a miserable pittance from those who by experience have become suspicious of fraud. In the mean time, the support of the deserving poor is irregular and precarious. Sometimes their petitions may be heard, and they may be liberally supplied; at other times their prayers will be rejected, and they will suffer the extremity of want. The uncertainty of future subsistence must poison every present en-

joyment; unless, indeed, by habit, they lose all sense of this abject dependence. But in this case, they will also lose all attention to economy and prudence, squandering in immediate indulgence whatever they may occasionally procure beyond a bare subsistence, and trusting for the maintenance of to-morrow to new contributions from the humane.

Experience of the multiplied evils of public begging can scarcely fail to suggest the improvement of collecting the contributions of the charitable into a general fund to be administered by trustees. By such an institution, it may reasonably be expected that a check will be given to imposture, and some attention secured to the wants of the deserving. The trustees, on their guard against the feelings of the moment, will be at pains to enquire into the truth of the representations that are made to them, and, in the performance of this duty, they must soon become acquainted with the characters and circumstances of those committed to their charge. The indigent may apply with confidence where they know that their claims, however modestly stated, will meet with attention; and the idle and dissolute, aware that their impostures must be detected, will no longer seek a livelihood by inventing tales of fictitious distress.

It may be more justly objected to such contributions, than to private charity, that they throw

the burden of maintaining the poor unequally on the inhabitants. Where they have been adopted, the chief collections have been made at the churches, and therefore the sums contributed by the lower and middling ranks have been much greater, in proportion to their wealth, than those bestowed by the rich. Even the poorest person puts something into the box, while the richest gives little more than those who are just above the rank of workmen. The contribution is rather in proportion to the regularity in attending public worship, than according to the wealth of the inhabitants; and in general those are by no means the most opulent who are found most frequently at church. Nor has the contributor the same reward from his own feelings that is inseparable from private charity. He may be doing much more good to his fellow-creatures, but that good is neither presented to his senses, nor impressed upon his imagination. He cannot follow each small sum which he bestows, and enjoy the happiness which it creates. From habit and from example, he gives a weekly contribution, without thinking of the distress which he is assisting to relieve; and as the motive does not reach his heart, so neither do consequences so general and undefined affect his imagination. If he think of it at all, he is apt to repine, that, in consequence of the mode of collection, he should contribute to a public object more largely than others who are in more affluent circum-

stances. He views it as a tax which custom and the public expectation impose upon him every time that he is present at public worship; and, like other taxes, he thinks it ought to be proportioned, not to the religion, but to the wealth, of the several inhabitants.

There is also reason to fear, that funds voluntarily raised may be fluctuating, and sometimes inadequate to the support of the poor. What is deficient in the church collections must be provided by the solicitations of the managers, the success of which will ever be precarious. At one time, more may be collected by popular and active trustees than is requisite for the mere subsistence of the indigent, and the surplus, if divided among them, will encourage a temporary profusion: at another time, from the indolence of the trustees, the funds will be deficient, and the poor, by the negligence of others, will be involved in the utmost distress.

It happens unfortunately, that contributions are apt to fall off, at the very moment that the claims upon the fund are increased. In seasons of scarcity, of sickness, or of interruption to trade, many who gave a little to the weekly collections, find their utmost exertions requisite for their own support, and such as bestowed larger sums are assailed by stronger and more urgent claims from those, with whose distresses they are personally acquainted. The trustees may, there-

fore, be forced to abridge their usual allowances, at the very time that they ought to be increased, and to refuse admission on their lists to new applicants, no less miserable and deserving than those whom they are accustomed to supply. When the distress, indeed, becomes excessive, public liberality will, most probably, more than make up the deficiency in the funds; but before this general impression can be made on the public mind, much misery must be endured; and if ultimately, as will frequently happen, the subscriptions should be too liberal, a premium will be held out to idleness, at a time when the most industrious are involved in difficulties, and the independent spirit of the people will be injured by a promiscuous distribution of alms.

It is a farther objection to every scheme of forming voluntary contributions into a public fund, that, though it may mitigate, it cannot remove, the evils of public begging. Many very charitable people will rather trust to their own discernment in the distribution of their alms, than to that of administrators, over whom, from the nature of the institution, they can have no control. Not a few, it is to be feared, will prefer the enjoyment of the gratitude of those whom they themselves relieve, to the satisfaction of knowing that, in common with others, they are promoting, in a secret, but much more effectual manner, the welfare of the deserving; and still

a greater number, from weakness of character, will give to solicitation and imposture, what, in place of mitigating distress, encourages idleness and fraud. In all these ways, private will interfere with public charity; the general fund will be deprived of part of its supplies, and mendicity, with all its evils, will continue to prevail. It would be the most aggravated inhumanity to punish those for soliciting relief, for whose maintenance no adequate provision had been made by the state; and it would be the grossest injustice to inflict penalties on such, as, in giving alms, exercised an acknowledged right over their own property. Such laws, however they may be multiplied, and however cruel in their enactments, must remain impotent, against the wants of the poor, the humanity of the rich, and the moral feelings of all by whom they are to be enforced.

In Holland, it is true, voluntary contributions were found to be an ample fund for the poor, and mendicity was there less prevalent than in the rest of Europe.* But it ought to be considered, that, from the frugality of that people, the number of poor was small, and the affluence of the other inhabitants, compared with their habits of living, very great. In a more luxurious

* M'Farlane's Enq. concerning the Poor, Chap. VIII. Sec. III.

nation, where dissipation occasioned extended misery in the lower ranks, and considerable embarrassment even in the highest, the same system might be altogether inefficient. In such circumstances, it is probable, that the relief of the indigent must be forced by sympathy with their actual sufferings, or provided for by a general regulation of the state. Accordingly, in England, the numerous laws requiring the clergy and justices to urge individuals to contribute to a general fund, the inhuman punishments denounced against beggars, and the penalties attached to the exercise of private charity, were all found ineffectual, and recourse was had at last, with evident reluctance, to a compulsory provision for the poor.*

The right, however, of government to levy taxes, for the support of the poor, is inadmissible except under great limitations. Charity, though a moral duty incumbent on all, belongs to that class of duties which cannot justly be enforced. The refusal to alleviate the sufferings of our fellow-creatures properly subjects us to general contempt and detestation; but as the rights of others are not infringed by our hardness of heart, as their condition is rendered in no respect more intolerable, our refusal cannot subject us to punishment; and of that, of which the omission

* A very clear deduction of the English statutes on this subject, with many valuable remarks, will be found in Sir Fred. M. Eden's State of the Poor, Book I.

cannot be punished, it is obvious that the performance cannot be compelled.* Here law has no province. It must be left to the feelings and conscience of each individual, how far he may choose to deprive himself of part of his luxuries, in order to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. It is equally unjust to compel him to do so by penalties, and to take away his property for this purpose without his own consent. A tax, levied avowedly, not for the benefit of the contributor, but of others possessing no claim over his property, seems repugnant to the first principles of just government; and it is probably from some obscure perception of this injustice, that poors rates, even to a moderate extent, as those levied in some parts of Scotland confessedly are, excite more dissatisfaction, than the heaviest taxes for the service of the state.

But there is another view in which a moderate provision for the poor will appear less exceptionable. The preservation of our own existence, and that of our helpless offspring, is so strongly recommended to our care by nature, that neither a sense of duty, nor the fear of punishment, can deter him, who is perishing by want, from invading the possessions of his neighbour. Human laws, for obvious reasons, have made no exceptions on account of this irresis-

* Prel. Enquiry, Chap. II. Sec. II.

tible temptation, but there never has been an instance of the infliction of punishment where the existence of such extreme poverty was satisfactorily proved. It requires little observation to be convinced, that, almost in every mind, the idea of right will yield to the assaults of absolute want, and little philosophy to conclude, that what, in the particular circumstances, is almost unavoidable, is no proper object of chastisement. If the poor, then, be not supported, theft and robbery must often be left unpunished. The consequence would be, that the plea of extreme indigence might be set up and plausibly supported, even when it had no foundation in truth, and every violation of the right of property which went unpunished would weaken moral restraint, both in the mind of the person by whom the offence had been committed, and in the estimation of others, who, without enquiring minutely into the cause, saw it passed over with impunity. In order to repress crimes, punishment must be regular and certain; and, that in every case we may have a right to inflict punishment, the irresistible temptation of extreme want must be removed. If voluntary contribution cannot afford that assurance of support which may prevent self-preservation from being arrayed against the dictates of morals and the ordinances of law, this is strictly one of the cases,

in which public regulations are requisite for the benefit and safety of all the citizens. Poors rates, therefore, may be levied, not for the purpose of enforcing the duty of charity, but as the only effectual mode of protecting property. This argument, it may be remarked, justifies no public provision for the poor beyond a bare subsistence; a restriction which sound views of policy would equally suggest.

It has indeed been argued, that all certainty of the poor being sheltered from absolute want is inexpedient, as it may relax the industry and economy of the labouring classes. Hold out to a labourer, it has been said, the certainty of maintenance in his old age, and he will neglect to make provision for himself during his youth; show to the idle and dissolute that, when sick or out of employment, they will be supported by the state, and they will instantly devise means to exempt themselves from labour; provide for the support and education of the children of the poor, and marriages will be contracted without even the expectation of the offspring being reared by their parents. The more you increase your funds, the more will you increase the number of those who look to them, not to their own exertions, for support; and without diminishing in any degree the sum of human misery, all that the public regulations can do, is to throw the

burden of maintaining the idle and profligate, on the industrious and deserving.*

In this representation, if applied to poors rates as they exist in England, there is probably little exaggeration; but the abuses of that particular system are not justly chargeable against every public provision for the poor.

If the funds raised by voluntary contribution be always sufficient for the subsistence of the poor, the same certainty of maintenance is afforded, as if they were levied by a tax. Mankind are more influenced by what strikes their senses, than by deductions of reason; more impressed by what actually takes place around them, than by probabilities which they have never seen realised. While every poor person is supplied with food, those who are in danger of becoming poor, without thinking of the source from which the supply is derived, will look forward with perfect confidence to their own maintenance and that of their children. In vain would you tell them, that the charity is voluntary, and may be withdrawn; no argument will convince them, that the aid which has uniformly been afforded to others will be withheld from them. There is but one effectual way of impressing upon their minds the possibility of their being abandoned

* These arguments have been illustrated by many authors. They are very forcibly stated by Lord Kames in his Sketches of the Hist. of Man, Sketch X.

to the extremity of want, and that is by the example of others gradually perishing without relief. But whatever, in the pride of system, authors may write, no man can seriously wish that such spectacles should, from time to time, be exhibited to the public.

In truth, the idea that the prospect of public aid during sickness or old age is injurious to economy in youth, seems altogether a misapprehension. Profusion was never occasioned by a calculation of distant consequences, but always by the power of immediate temptation overcoming every consideration of future welfare. To account for the thoughtless extravagance of many of our workmen, it is unnecessary to have recourse to views of futurity, which seldom regulate their conduct, and which, if they were entertained, would lead to a very opposite result. Beset with temptations, and seduced by example, a young labourer has no motive to parsimony but a desire of bettering his condition at a very distant day. What he can save in a week or a month can have no sensible effect on his future condition; but even this trifle may add materially to his immediate gratification. No wonder then, that he too frequently yields to present pleasure, deferring, as he thinks, only for a short time, the commencement of that rigid economy which he proposes to exercise during the rest of his life. If the prospect of independence and comfort, to which he might look forward with

assurance, be ineffectual in opposing the attractions of present desire, there can be little reason to conclude that these motives of immediate enjoyment, which unhappily are in themselves so powerful, will be much invigorated by the discovery of a workhouse, or a bare subsistence doled out by the public, as the distant goal to which his extravagance must conduct him.

The misapplication, indeed, of charity, whether public or private, may hold out immediate and powerful incitements to idleness and vice. Many will refuse to work, if they find that it is not requisite to their present subsistence, and almost every one will seek pretences to get upon the poors-roll, if the provision be so abundant, that those who are supported by the public live more comfortably than industrious workmen. The choice in this case is directed by no distant views and expectations, but by the desire of immediate idleness, or of immediate gratifications.

The English poor laws are undoubtedly liable to this objection. To vest an unlimited power of assessment in the overseers of the poor is not the way to render them sparing of the public money, or very vigilant in the detection of imposture. It is easier for an overseer to admit a doubtful claim than to investigate it; it is more agreeable for him to acquire, at the expense of others, the reputation of liberality, than to subject himself, by the strict performance of his duty, to the im-

putation of hardness of heart. It is even pleasant to the contributors, who often overlook the more distant consequences, to see the impotent and old wearing out the remnant of life in the midst of comforts and innocent gratifications. As if these were not of themselves sufficient stimulants to profusion, the law of England empowers a justice of peace (and in what parish may not a justice be found desirous of popularity, or unacquainted with the interests of his country?) to issue orders for maintenance, which the overseers are bound to obey.* The consequences are such as might be expected. The poor live better in the workhouse, or on their pensions, than a labourer who has a family; their numbers are so much increased, that in some parishes more than one-fourth of the population is said to be maintained, wholly or in part, by the public; and the poors rates of England, independently of all charitable foundations and private contributions, probably amounting to a much larger sum, have been stated at two,† and even at three, ‡ millions sterling a year.

For such evils it should seem that a remedy might be found, without depriving the indigent

* Previously to the 9th Geo. I. c. 7, a single justice of peace might exercise this power without consulting the overseers. By that act he must summon the overseers to show cause why relief should not be given.

† Sir F. M. Eden, on the State of the Poor, vol. I. p. 370.

‡ Kames' Sketches of the History of Man, Sketch X.

of necessary relief. Overseers, annually elected by the inhabitants of each parish, should determine, at stated meetings held once a week, on all petitions for assistance; they should appoint an inspector, with a moderate salary, and removeable at pleasure, to report to them the condition of each applicant; and from this report, the testimony of the neighbours, and, when necessary, a personal examination of the state of the family, they ought to decide on the nature and amount of the relief to be granted. There probably ought to be a small establishment, supported in the most frugal manner, for such old people as have no near relations with whom they could reside;* but the parish assistance should, in general, be issued partly in money, and partly in provisions, and the overseers should be sworn to administer only such relief as, in conjunction with each pauper's earnings, would, in their opinion, maintain him in less affluence than a common labourer. The overseers ought to be enjoined to keep a register of all who receive charity, specifying their age, their state of health, the number of their family, their usual earnings, and the amount and nature of the assistance afforded them. They ought also to keep a list of all applications that had been refused, with the reasons

* The objection to charity workhouses are very fully stated by Dr M'Farlane in his Enquiries concerning the Poor, Enq. II. Chap. V.

of their rejection. These lists ought, for a certain number of days each year, to lie open for the inspection of the inhabitants, and at the end of that time, they should be submitted to a meeting of superintendents of the poor (also elected by the inhabitants,) who might give the overseers such directions as they judged requisite, and who should, at the same time, fix the amount of the annual assessment.* By some such plan as this, it is probable that abuses would be at least as effectually checked, as by any trustees appointed to distribute the produce of a voluntary contribution; nor will the example of Scotland, where the affairs of the poor are gratuitously administered by the vestries, and in some of the larger towns by delegates from the several corporate bodies, allow us to doubt, if the utility of the system were evident, of the ease with which overseers and superintendents would be found among the respectable classes of the inhabitants.

There is another objection to public provisions for the poor, which it may be thought difficult to remove by any system of management. When the tax is compulsory, it is conceived to be unjust that one parish should be forced to maintain those whose youth was spent in the service of another. It may be reasonable that in-

* This plan is not materially different from that suggested by Dr M'Farlane. See Enq. III. Chap. III. Sections 2, 3, and 4

dustry during health and youth should be rewarded by relief in sickness and old age; but those, who derived none of the advantages of the one, ought not to be burdened with the charge of the other. Hence the necessity of laws for regulating parish settlements, and for passing paupers to the part of the country to which they belong; laws, which, however just in their objects, are oppressive on the labourer, whom they preclude from change of residence, disadvantageous to rising manufactures by preventing the supply of workmen from being proportioned to the demand, and productive of endless litigation and expence.* These laws have been so far improved by a late statute,† that no workman can now be removed, from the mere suspicion that he may one day become chargeable to the parish; but there is still the grossest inhumanity in banishing a man from the place in which he hoped to end his days, where he can most easily find employment, where his children may be settled, and those to whom he is attached may reside, because age, accident, or disease have deprived him, perhaps only for a

* "This single clause of a short act of parliament," says Sir F. M. Eden, in speaking of the act respecting settlements, "has occasioned more doubts and difficulties in Westminster-"hall, and has perhaps been more profitable to the profes-"sion of the law, than any other point in English jurispru-"dence."—*State of the Poor, vol. I. page* 176.

† 35 Geo. III. c. 101.

time, of the power of gaining his livelihood by his labour.

The necessity of such a law, however, arises altogether from the inequality, in different parts of the country, of the ordinary provisions for the poor. While the indigent in one parish are supported profusely, and those in another receive a scanty and perhaps irregular supply, all who are in want would flock to particular towns and villages, unless prevented by a law restricting their claims for aid to those parishes in which they had been accustomed to reside. But if perfect equality were established all over the kingdom; if the poor received every where a maintenance inferior to that of a common labourer, and no where any thing more, there could be no inducement, on that account, to prefer one place of residence to another, and the law of settlement might be safely repealed. There seems to be only one case, in which the burdening of a parish with all the resident poor could occasion injustice; and that case is not provided for by the existing statutes. In towns consisting of several parishes, the rich usually live in one quarter, and the poor in another; the cheapness of house-rents, too, and the salubrity of air, induce a number of workmen, and particularly those in straitened circumstances or delicate health, those who are advancing in years or have numerous families, to reside in the suburbs; and thus workmen, al-

though employed in town, become a burden in sickness and old age on the contiguous parishes. But for this injustice there is a very obvious remedy. In many towns already, the poor, though under the charge of parochial overseers, are maintained from a fund levied generally from all the inhabitants; and there does not appear to be any well-founded objection to extending the same system to the adjoining parishes.

It has been further urged against every compulsory provision for the poor, that it is adverse to the benevolent feelings, converting that into a tax, which, when given from proper motives, improves the affections,

> "And blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

That the poors-rates of England may occasionally have this effect cannot be denied. He who pays a high tax, and knows that the poor have only to apply to the overseers or to a justice of peace to be maintained in comfort, may think that he has done his duty to society; but even in such circumstances, it may be doubted whether the poors rates are not made the pretence, while they are by no means the real motive, of the refusal. However that may be, private charity could never be superseded by a public regulation, which ensured to the indigent nothing more than subsistence.

Among our fellow-creatures, particularly in nations highly commercial, proper objects of charity somewhat more liberal must always abound. Industrious workmen rendered by disease incapable of labour; women of exemplary conduct exerting their utmost endeavours to rear their fatherless offspring; the diseased and aged who require more comforts than the public aid can procure them; families struggling with every hardship rather than degrade themselves to the rank of paupers; those who, accustomed to many indulgences, have been sunk by misfortunes, or even by some degree of imprudence, to unlooked-for indigence: these and other descriptions of the poor would surely open a sufficient field for the display of active benevolence, and, in relieving their distress, the charitable would have the satisfaction of knowing, that, in place of relaxing industry, they were mitigating unavoidable calamities; that, in place of encouraging vice, the inevitable consequence of promiscuous charity, they were in general rewarding virtue.

While such acts of beneficence are left unrestrained, it could not surely be matter of regret that public begging in the streets should be discouraged. At present, when charity is asked by a miserable object clothed in rags, and bearing a certificate of famine in his countenance, no man of common humanity can refuse some small relief. The beggar may be a stranger unwilling

to be passed to a remote parish, where, on the return of his health, he could find no employment, or unable to bear the fatigue of so long a journey; he may belong to a parish, in Scotland, in which no tax is levied, and the church collections have been inadequate; or he may have been refused all parish relief in England, because he was unwilling to enter a workhouse, often justly represented as a receptacle of vice. In such circumstances, no prohibitions can be effectual against mendicity. Punishment may drive the beggars from the streets of a town, but only by increasing the number of those who go from door to door, or spread themselves through the country. But if regular provision were every where made for all unable to gain their livelihood, from whatever part of the world they had originally come, the most humane, in the certainty that the refusal of alms could not operate as a sentence of death, might, and many of them would, withhold their charity, till they enquired whether there were any thing in the character of the applicant, or in his peculiar circumstances, which entitled him to more than such a maintenance as was afforded by law. Were such enquiries to become general, it is obvious, that without any punishment from which the mind revolts, imposture would frequently be detected, and public begging, unless when there

was a real claim to compassion, would be abandoned as an unprofitable trade.

It is, however, on all accounts, desirable that those who may one day be reduced to indigence should themselves provide, in the season of health and prosperity, for their future subsistence. In this view, the associations known by the name of Friendly Societies merit the highest approbation. Their members acquire a right to that assistance during sickness and old age, which, being the fruit of their own economy, it can be no degradation to receive. If these societies existed in sufficient numbers, and were adapted to all ranks in life, by receiving annual, monthly, and weekly contributions of various extent, and issuing pensions proportioned to these several contributions, every man in the country might, by very inconsiderable sacrifices, secure himself against future want. The great bar to accumulation, particularly among the lower orders, arises from the smallness of the sum which at one time can be saved. As he cannot lend out a few pounds or shillings at interest, a workman is obliged to keep them by him, till his store increase to a larger sum; and the knowledge that he has immediate gratification in his power, by the sacrifice of what can conduce only in a very trifling degree to his future welfare, is a temptation constantly acting on his mind. But when every little sum, as it is saved, is paid into the funds of a

society, it is instantly put out of his own power, and remains irrevocably destined to his maintenance in sickness and in age. Such societies seem free from every objection, and, if generally established, might supersede, in a great measure, all that charity, whether public or private, which consists in distributing money to the poor.

Hitherto, friendly societies have been voluntary associations, whose affairs are conducted in the way most agreeable to a majority of the members; and, with regard to such of them as provide for more than a mere subsistence, there can be no doubt that they ought to remain on that footing. Whatever may be the case, in so far as subsistence is concerned, all attempts to enforce economy, in order to provide for future indulgences, are evidently tyrannical, by encroaching on the province of private discretion. Nor is it likely that the interference of the public should improve the administration of the funds of such societies. From mistake in the original calculations, the sums collected may be inadequate to the pensions, or losses may sometimes be sustained by lending the money on insufficient securities; but such errors will speedily be corrected under the management of those who are personally interested in the success of the scheme. If the plan, however, were rendered so general, by statute, that it might be trusted to as a substitute for poors rates, it would be requisite both

that the contributions should be rendered compulsory, and that provision should be made for the safety and just distribution of the money collected.

The moment that every inhabitant is forced, by joining one of those societies, to contribute to the maintenance of the poor, a tax, in whatever way it may be disguised, and however beneficial its purpose, is laid on labour; and, according to the ideas entertained of the operation of such a tax, it might be objected to as injurious to manufactures, or oppressive to the lower orders of the people.*

By those who consider all taxes on labour as ultimately repaid to the workman in the rise of his wages, it may be contended that to force the people to contribute to the funds for the poor, will enhance the price of our manufactures, and subject us to a disadvantageous competition in foreign markets. Without entering at present into the general argument, it may perhaps be a sufficient reply, that what must spread itself over every branch of industry would not probably be materially felt in any; that the tax now paid by the rich under the name of poors rates, would be levied from them, according to their expenditure, in a much less oppressive manner; and that

* The effect of taxes in raising the wages of labour is considered in Book III. Part II. Chap. II. Sec. I.

f any particular manufacture could not bear in he foreign market the very trifling enhancement esulting from the tax, that manufacture might ither be abandoned without much disadvantage, r maintained in its former condition by an equal- y insignificant bounty on exportation.

If the contribution paid by the labourers does ot return to them in the advance of wages, it is rged, on the other hand, that a compulsory fund ust be unjust towards the lower orders of the eople. It ought however to be considered, that is incumbent on every man, while in health, ot only to maintain himself and his family, ut to lay up sufficient provision for the day of ickness, and for the subsistence of his children n case of his decease. This is not only a moral luty which it is becoming and laudable for him o perform, but, in as far as his family is concern- d, it is a duty of the strictest obligation. His eglect would be a direct injury to those child- en whom he had brought into the world, and ociety has a right to interfere for the prevention f this or any other injustice.* In so far as he imself is concerned, prudence, indeed, is no roper object of control. But when the conse- uences of idleness and profusion must be the ntailing of the burden of his maintenance on thers, the state may, without much impropriety,

* Prel. Enquiry, Chap. II. Sec. II.

take steps to guard against what would otherwise be an inevitable hardship. Neither humanity nor good policy will suffer even the vicious to perish from want; and there is surely less injustice in enforcing the performance of so clear a moral duty, as that of each man providing for his own subsistence, than in compelling the industrious to furnish food, clothes, and lodging, for the idle and improvident.

Beyond mere subsistence, however, no compulsory fund can have any pretence to justice; and therefore all those schemes which proportion the annual compulsory payments, and the pensions in case of sickness or old age, to the rank or wealth of the contributors, are radically objectionable, even if it were possible, as it evidently is not, to ascertain the wealth and income of every citizen. All the contributions should be equal, and each pension only what will furnish a mere subsistence. It is indeed desirable, that much more than this should be done by voluntary association; but this ought to be the limit of the legal provision; and the same mode of administration that promised to be effectual in the proper distribution of the poors rate, would be equally applicable to the compulsory contribution of all the inhabitants of the country. Such a contribution is different from the poors rates only in being levied in equal sums from all, in place of being proportioned, like other taxes, to

the estimated wealth of the contributors; a difference which in no degree affects the management or distribution of the fund.

It is, no doubt, extremely difficult to devise any mode in which the levying of contributions from the lower orders could be effected. It were vain to expect a labourer to make his payments otherwise than in small sums at the moment he received his wages. The collection must therefore be weekly, or in some cases monthly, occasioning excessive trouble, and an expense which would greatly enhance the amount of the tax Nor does there seem to be any way of enforcing the payment, which will not either occasion frauds, or greatly increase the number of the poor. The employer may be enjoined to retain the tax from his workmen, but no superintendance, even armed with inquisitorial powers, can prevent him, for the purpose of favouring his workmen, or adding to his own profits, from rendering a false account. Besides, in the course of a month, of a week, or even of a day, the same labourer will sometimes work for several masters, and it will be a matter of nice calculation for each to retain the proper proportion of the tax. Notwithstanding these difficulties, however, this is perhaps the only way in which the contribution could possibly be raised. If the labourer himself is to be accountable, there seem but two modes of enforcing payment; by cutting off defaulters

from the benefit of the funds, or by the infliction of fines and imprisonment. The one mode would suffer the family of the profligate to starve, or drive them to the commission of crimes; the other, in endeavouring to recover a trifling debt, would instantly bring the heavy charge of their maintenance upon the fund.* The idle and dissolute would therefore be necessarily exempted, while their support in sickness, together with a most expensive establishment for the purpose of collecting the tax, would be an oppressive and unjust charge on industry. As long as friendly societies are voluntary associations, the desire of the good opinion of the members, and the fear of losing the benefit of the fund, may render the payments regular, and consequently easy of collection; but such considerations would lose their influence, if the association were so extensive that the names of defaulters could scarcely be known, and if its object were to secure subsistence, and nothing more, to every inhabitant.

The general principles, then, that ought to regulate the ordinary provision for the poor, neither sanction the disposal of unlimited funds by parish overseers, nor support the opinion which, in consequence of multiplied abuses, is gaining

* In Mr Acland's scheme, as detailed by Sir F. M. Eden, in the State of the Poor, vol. I. page 373, the payments are to be enforced by penalties, but no mode is pointed out for recovering the penalties from the indigent.

ground in England, that poors rates should be entirely abolished. The assessment, strictly confined to what is requisite for the subsistence of the indigent, should be levied equally from all the citizens; or, if that be impracticable, it should be proportioned to the wealth of the several contributors; for although it may be proper that every man should provide for his own subsistence, the moment that this principle is departed from, and the expense is justified as requisite to the general measures of police, the charge becomes precisely similar to all others defrayed by the state. There are, however, two establishments, an orphan hospital and an infirmary, in support of which, on account of their peculiar nature, it is not improbable that a compulsory tax and voluntary contribution might, with propriety and advantage, be conjoined.

To maintain destitute children is a duty which humanity imperiously commands; and to prevent those, whose existence is thus preserved, from being left without direction and control in their infancy and youth, seems a very necessary branch of police. Nor is it probable, that, under proper regulations, an orphan, or even a foundling, hospital, would be attended with those effects in encouraging improper marriages, and paving the way for general debauchery, with which such institutions have frequently been charged. It may reasonably be doubted, whe-

ther any marriage was ever contracted with the view of sending the children to the orphan house, and still more, whether the intention of exposing the child that might be born, or avoiding its maintenance by leaving the country, ever operated as an inducement to form an illicit connection. It is true, indeed, that if all children that are presented are immediately received into a foundling hospital, without enquiry into the circumstances of their parents, many will be found unprincipled enough, particularly among the unmarried, to silence the feelings of nature, and shift the burden of maintaining their offspring from themselves upon the public. But without denying assistance to deserted and destitute children, it is surely possible to remedy this abuse, by enquiring minutely into the circumstances of each particular case, and punishing those parents by whom their infants are abandoned or exposed. Were the institution supported in part by voluntary contribution, attention to public opinion, joined to the unwillingness of the managers to solicit additional subscriptions, would probably be found a sufficient check to the profusion and carelessness which are apt to prevail where the funds are unlimited; but a tax might be proper for erecting the building, and for preventing the necessity of suddenly contracting the establishment during years of uncommon pressure, when, from general

misfortune, or unusual demands on benevolence, voluntary subscriptions were deficient.

Hospitals for the cure of disease are perhaps the most beneficial of all the institutions by which the miseries incident to human nature are relieved. A poor man confined in a small ill-aired apartment, unable to work for his own support and that of his family, without the means of procuring proper advice, medicine, and nourishment, may be long afflicted, or even cut off from the world, by an illness, which, under proper treatment, could neither have been tedious nor fatal. His disease, too, if at all infectious, is apt to be caught by his wife and children, and his recovery must be retarded by the constant spectacle of their sufferings, and the reflection that he is unable to procure them requisite assistance. In a well-regulated hospital, on the other hand, he has every advantage of air, of attendance, of diet, and of medical advice; he knows that his family are safe from the contagion of his disease; and he looks forward with confidence to the time when he shall return with renovated health to his usual occupations. Infirmaries, too, are much less liable to abuse than other charitable institutions. However comfortable they may be made, there is little risk of their affording temptations to indolence, or of their being improperly crowded through the negligence of the managers. It can scarcely be apprehended that any one would

voluntarily contract a disease, or break a limb, merely to be well lodged and fed during the period of his cure; and if a few patients may occassionally attempt to continue in the hospital after they ought to be discharged, it is not probable that this deception, which may easily be detected, and which must subject them to confinement and to a course of medicine, should be frequently repeated. But there are other abuses, which, if the funds arise from an unlimited tax, are more likely to be introduced. Offices will be unnecessarily multiplied, salaries will be raised too high, profusion will pervade all the economy of the house, the inattention of nurses and apothecaries will diminish the comfort and retard the recovery of the patients, and the medical attendants will by degrees relax in the regular performance of their duty. No preventive of such abuses can be so regular and steady in its operations, as the constant impression that the funds of the charity are dependent on public opinion; and accordingly the infirmaries, supported by subscription in all the principal towns of Britain, exhibit the most pleasing contrast to the filth, misery, and neglect, which are said to have been apparent in the magnificent public hospitals of France. The building may very properly be erected by a parish rate, and a fund may be provided in the same way for cases of emergency; but a great part at least of the

annual expenditure should be defrayed by an annual voluntary contribution.

Besides supporting these establishments for the benefit of the indigent, establishments which, under proper regulations, ought not to be burdensome to the state, the laws of many countries, not satisfied with relieving poverty after it has occurred, have attempted by various institutions to eradicate idleness, from which that poverty most frequently proceeds. In this view, many severe statutes have been framed, both in England and Scotland, subjecting those, who, without any visible means of livelihood, neglect or refuse to work, to the most cruel punishments; to slavery, imprisonment, whipping, and even to death.* The extreme barbarity of these laws necessarily prevented their execution; but even if they had been milder, their principle could scarcely have been justified. The immediate effect of idleness is to occasion distress to him who indulges in it, not to impair the happiness of others. It is a vice which carries its own punishment along with it, and, not leading directly to injury, is no proper object of coercion. That it prepares the way for crimes is undoubtedly true; but were the province of law to be so enlarged as to counteract offences in

* For the English statutes on this subject see Sir F. M. Eden's State of the Poor, Book I. Chap. I. and II.; and for the Scotch statutes, see M'Farlane's Enquiries concerning the Poor, Enq. II. Chap. I.

their predisposing causes, it might perhaps be as reasonable to punish the sloth, intemperance, and extravagance of the rich, as the indolence and improvidence of the poor. Such ought never to be the object of human laws. To punish a fellow-creature on pretence of promoting his own welfare, is presumptuous and unjust; to inflict penalties as a preventive of possible, or even probable misdemeanours, is to punish him who is yet innocent, because in our wisdom we foresee that he may one day be guilty. The right of coercion, as founded in the nature of man, arises only in consequence of actual injury, and can have no existence before a crime has been committed.*

Nor is it probable that the punishment of idleness will have much effect in arresting the progress of depravity. He who is forced to drudge for another is not likely to become enamoured of industry; he who is whipped or branded like a malefactor must ever after be callous to reproach; and a person who is confined with the profligate may be expected to make rapid advances in every kind of vice. In attempting to eradicate idleness, the laws, if enforced, would become a fruitful source of disorder in society; and the infliction of death, barbarous as it would be, is probably the only penalty created by those sta-

* Book II. Chap. II. Sec. I.

tutes, which promises, in any degree, to accomplish the end proposed.

Statutes ordaining the punishment of idleness, necessarily imply that work should be provided for every one willing to labour. Without this accompaniment, they would be equally absurd and unjust. But to procure unlimited employment, at all times, for the whole people, is far beyond the powers of government. The demand for labour regulates the quantity of employment so completely, that attempts by statute to create work, for which there is no demand, must always be futile, and often mischievous. If the inhabitants be forced in rotation to employ such labourers as offer themselves, they must at the same time be entrusted with discretionary powers, for the punishment of idleness, altogether inconsistent with the rights of humanity: and even when armed with such powers, they will find the labour which severity can extort very inadequate to the wages which they are forced to pay. If work be provided by a public institution, the consequences will be oppressive to the industrious poor. The establishment of public manufactures can have no tendency to increase the demand. Those who apply at the workhouses may indeed get employment, but, to exactly the same extent, other labourers must be thrown idle. Every man, therefore, that is employed by the workhouse, must create a necessity in others to make

a similar application; and the consequences must be, partly that those who feel reluctance in pleading poverty, that is, the most deserving of the people, will be oppressed, and partly that goods for which there is no demand will be accumulated in the public stores. In the course of time, indeed, the demand may probably revive; but even then the benefit of the change will be intercepted from the industrious, by that accumulation of goods, which, being instantly brought into the market, will continue to depress the wages of the labourer.

All schemes for employing workmen whose work is not in demand are misapplications of national capital. Were the trade profitable, were it even attended with a moderate loss for a short time, it would still be carried on by those who found it disagreeable or inconvenient to change the investment of their capital; and no surer proof can be adduced of its being disadvantageous for the country, than its being deserted by all accustomed to conduct it. If in their hands it be unprofitable, it may be expected to be altogether ruinous, when subjected to the many disadvantages, to the negligence, frauds, and expenses, to which public undertakings are necessarily exposed.

The immediate loss attending such schemes of providing work for the poor, is by no means their only disadvantage. They tend to deaden the in-

genuity and active exertions of the labourers, who, incited by the difficulties of their situation, would otherwise have sought out employments, perhaps less easy, or less pleasant, but more in demand. Master manufacturers, too, finding their capitals unproductive, would look eagerly round for some new branch of trade, and in this search they would be materially assisted by the temporary reduction in the rate of wages. All this activity is counteracted by the interference of the public. A workman will scarcely think of changing his habits, while he can get employment, even by some sacrifices, in his former occupation; nor can it be expected that public administrators, not personally interested in the profit or loss attending the manufacture, should be very zealous or successful in suiting it to the varying circumstances of the country. It is likely, then, that in a workhouse the same routine will continue unchanged, and that manufactures will be persevered in, long after they are abandoned by private adventurers, to the loss both of the establishment, and of those whom it employs.

Ought, then, the state to refuse all interference, while even the most industrious workmen, from circumstances over which they possess no control, are perishing from want? Certainly not. These are the proper seasons for executing public works; for constructing roads, canals, and harbours. Views of economy here coincide with

those of benevolence; that which in itself is beneficial to the state is executed, during an interruption of the ordinary demand for labour, somewhat cheaper than at another time; and new channels being opened up to draw off part of the surplus industry, those which were overflowing are somewhat relieved.

It is seldom, however, that by such means, without embarking in very hazardous and unprofitable schemes, the pressure on the people can be considerably mitigated. Additional assistance must therefore be afforded to such as are without employment; and probably there is no way in which this can be done so unexceptionably, as by a judicious distribution of money and provisions. The principles by which this charity should be regulated are easily deducible from the circumstances in which the necessity originates. As the relief is granted on account of the want of employment, it ought only to make up the unavoidable deficiency of wages, and to terminate whenever the demand for labour revives; and as it is most desirable that every person should exert himself to find new employment, the subsistence of labourers, partly or entirely thrown out of work, should be less liberal than that of those who, on account of sobriety, or skill, being retained at reduced wages by their employers, are still independent of parish support. Were the relief in times of difficulty thus limited, it could neither

encourage idleness nor repress exertion; for every one would feel that the instant he could procure regular employment, his means of maintaining himself and his family would be sensibly improved.

Scarcity of the necessaries of life, like want of demand for labour, occasionally involves even the most industrious workmen in distress. The evil in the two cases is almost the same, but the cure is extremely different. If there be not sufficient corn to supply the population, the distribution of provisions to the poor can have no effect, but that of maintaining one person with the food which would have been purchased by another. The demand created by this charitable supply must enhance the price of corn, and this rise must bear hard on those classes of the inhabitants who are barely able to subsist without parochial aid. The rich who distribute the provisions will contribute to the relief of the indigent, not by depriving themselves of any considerable proportion of their luxuries, far less by subjecting themselves to any painful privations, while another class of citizens, without being considered as in any respect the benefactors of the poor, will be reduced, by the charity of their superiors, to the utmost distress. A distribution of money, during a season of scarcity, by enabling the poor to purchase and consume a great-

er quantity of provisions, has precisely the same effect.

If, indeed, no other means can be devised for rescuing the poor from the extremity of want, even such measures must be adopted. However severe they may be on an industrious and valuable class of the inhabitants, they are preferable to that system which would teach us to stand by and see our fellow-creatures perish from want. Distress, which would be altogether intolerable if confined to a few, may be somewhat mitigated by being diffused over a greater number; and it is surely more desirable that many should be put on short allowance, than that one be starved. Even those who are most affected by the enhancement of the price of food would cheerfully submit to every privation, rather than be assailed by the cries, and harassed by the looks, of such as, after having sold every thing they possessed, were perishing from cold and hunger in the streets.

But the most desirable mode of relieving the distress arising from scarcity is by removing the cause. It is seldom that famine, or even scarcity, pervades the whole globe at once; and if provisions are any where plentiful, means may usually be found to draw them to those countries in which they are most in demand. The additional price itself will, in many cases, be a sufficient premium; but it is always in some degree counteracted by the expense of carriage,

which, if the distance be great, must discourage importation; and occasionally much misery may be suffered, and great alarm excited, before the ordinary operations of commerce can procure an abundant supply.

In such circumstances, it is natural for government, or for voluntary associations of individuals, to purchase and import corn for the support of the poor. The grain so procured, being sold without profit, comes cheaper to the consumer than what can be purchased from the merchant; the supply being brought from the nearest markets, even though they should not be the cheapest, sooner relieves the public anxiety; and new capital being thrown into the trade, the total amount of the importation might be expected to increase. Such seem to be the benevolent views which prompt the interference of government and of the rich; but the effects, it is to be feared, are very different from those expectations. The agents who are employed, having no interest in the speculation, and being without control from experienced merchants, are apt to conduct the purchases, transport, and sales, in a rash, expensive, and imprudent manner. They are at pains neither to discover the best markets, nor so to conduct their business, as, by escaping observation abroad, to keep down the price. Anxious to get immediate possession of the quantity which they are empowered to

purchase, and fond of the reputation of extensive dealers, they rush precipitately into the foreign market, raising the price to an extravagant degree. In the mean time, the regular merchants finding that they must compete with those who have no view to profit, gradually retire from what they know must become a losing trade; and the capital so withdrawn, even if it should be to a less amount than that by which it is replaced, might probably, under the direction of superior knowledge, prudence, and economy, have ensured a fuller and cheaper supply.

To a liberal bounty on importation, no such objections can be made. It diminishes the price in the home market nearly to the extent of the bounty; by giving new inducements to importation, and diminishing the risk, it attracts new capital to the trade, without repelling any of the old; it leaves the commerce in the hands of those who are best qualified to conduct it, who have established correspondents at all the foreign markets, who know the most economical modes of managing the speculation, and who are deeply interested in its result. It indeed depresses the price of corn at home, and thus deprives the farmer of part of his profits; but this may be fully compensated to him by a bounty on exportation during seasons of uncommon plenty.* It

* Book II. Chap. IV. Sec. V.

also occasions some expense to the state, though probably less than any other mode of relieving the public distress. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that there is no part of the expenditure of government which contributes so directly and so materially to the preservation of public tranquillity, and to the comforts and welfare of the people.

CHAPTER VII.

Of Public Institutions for the Education of Youth.

The moral and intellectual improvement of the people, though it cannot be a motive for the formation of government, is by far the most important advantage resulting from social institutions. The various discoveries in science and in arts, which originate in the wants and curiosity of individuals, become the property of the whole nation, the stock on which the discoveries of future ages are to be ingrafted, the spark which is destined to kindle genius yet unborn. Improvements in taste keep pace with those in science; and man, from a dull and languid being, who could be roused only by the cravings of appetite or the approach of danger, rises to a more dignified rank in the creation, cultivating his understanding, refining his imagination, and strengthening those moral sympathies by which he enters into the feelings, and becomes desirous of the happiness, of his friends, his countrymen, and the whole of mankind.

Even if our views were confined to national wealth, the cultivation of the arts and sciences,

from which that wealth is derived, must be an object of the first importance. But to those who justly appreciate moral and intellectual attainments, deeming the acquisition of riches desirable chiefly as the means of promoting mental improvement, all other objects of legislative provision are apt to appear comparatively trivial; and some degree of surprise may naturally be excited, that this, the first and greatest duty of government, should almost universally be left to the discretion or caprice of individuals.

A slight attention, however, to the condition of mankind, will evince the impossibility of conducting the education of the people according to any general and permanent plan. So various are the occupations, wealth, and talents, of the several inhabitants of an improved country, that no system can be laid down applicable to all. Knowledge, superfluous to one, may be altogether insufficient for another. Many, destined to maintain themselves by the labour of their hands, have occasion to be taught only to read and write; while a few, born perhaps in the humblest stations, are fitted by their natural talents, when aided by knowledge and invigorated by study, to delight or instruct the world. The refinement which would be prejudicial to the peasant, may prevent the opulent from sinking into languor, or seeking delusive excitement in vicious indulgence: bodily exercises which would strength-

en one constitution might be injurious or fatal to another: studies which developed the talents of those destined to eminence, would overload the minds, and unprofitably consume the time, of thousands of their countrymen.

To give the same education to men in such different circumstances would be to retard, in place of accelerating, national improvement, by rendering it necessary for each to procure suitable education for himself, after he had spent his youth in acquiring useless attainments. Every attempt to remedy this, by defining the various ranks of life, and adapting a system of education to each, would repress genius in the lower orders, while the innumerable shades of opulence, talents, and bodily strength, would mock the discriminating powers of language. To leave, on the other hand, to the discretionary power of any magistrate, what is so essential to the happiness and welfare of every individual, would be to institute the most vexatious and most degrading of tyrannies, over which, unless in very flagrant cases, even public opinion could have no control.

No means could be devised for preventing a system of public education, however admirable at its first institution, from becoming defective in new circumstances and amid rapid improvements. Sciences prescribed by the law could scarcely fail, in the progress of discovery, to become unimportant; the arts might be founded on

new principles, or on more ingenious applications of those already known; and national taste and knowledge might undergo such revolutions as to render former modes of study unfit for instruction. Public institutions could not follow these silent and gradual improvements in science and in taste. To adopt every innovation, it would be said, must be destructive of steadiness of discipline and of all solid acquirement; and this unquestionable truth would be a ready disguise for the indolence of instructors, and the prejudices of the learned. With light beaming around them, those unwieldy institutions would remain contented in a twilight, by which the forms of surrounding objects were distorted; and after a young man had gone through the accustomed routine of the public schools, he would be astonished, on entering the world, to find that much of what he had been taught was considered as frivolous, and no small portion of it exploded as false.

All these difficulties, inseparable from public instruction under the direction of the magistrate, disappear if the education of youth be entrusted to the care and affection of the nearest relations. With the exception, perhaps, of the very lowest order of the people, parents are sufficiently anxious for the welfare of their children, to give them such education as appears best adapted to their future prospects in life; or, if a few be inclined to neglect this duty, they will be de-

terred by the general odium which would follow so unusual a delinquency. Having every opportunity of ascertaining the extent of their talents, knowing the rank of life in which they are likely to be placed, and having considerable influence in directing their choice of a profession, parents are best able to judge, each for his own children, what branches of education are most requisite for their future prosperity and happiness. If there should not always be sufficient intelligence in the father to execute this duty, it is probable that he will be influenced by the opinion of some one whom he respects, or by the usual proceedings of such of his acquaintances as are in similar circumstances with himself. The determination will probably be more judicious than could be expected from a magistrate, whether aided by general rules, or left to the exercise of his own discretion. The attention, even of the most uninstructed parents, to the progress of their children, will be more constant and more efficient, than that which could be expected from those who, without any affection for the pupils, were actuated merely by a sense of duty: and this regular inspection and control, it may be observed, have an obvious tendency to strengthen the attachment of the parents and the corresponding respect of the children; sentiments on which much of the happiness and virtue of the people must ever depend. Neither is there any danger of a course

of education, thus conducted by individuals, lagging behind the discoveries of science, or the progress of the public mind; for every teacher, who neglects to keep pace with the national improvement, will speedily be warned of the necessity of greater exertion, by the rapid diminution of his school.

There is nothing, therefore, in the education of youth, to call for the control of government. It is not one of the cases, in which what is useful to all can be accomplished only by a general combination. On the contrary, it seems to be one of the instances in which the interference of the magistrate is positively injurious: but should it be only unnecessary, it behoves us to recollect that useless restraint of the will of individuals is one of the most vexatious forms in which tyranny can be exerted.

Setting aside, then, all public education under the superintendance of the state, however much it may have been extolled by the admirers of Spartan discipline, we shall proceed to enquire how far government, interfering in a less direct manner, should give encouragement to the acquisition of useful knowledge. Institutions having this object in view, may either be directed towards the education of all the citizens in the simplest and most requisite branches of knowledge; or they may tend to accelerate the

progress, and facilitate the study, of the more abstract sciences.

I. A very unreasonable and illiberal prejudice, against extending the benefits of education to the lower orders of the people, has sometimes been avowed. Even the being able to read, it has been alleged, renders the people impatient of labour, dissatisfied with their condition, profligate in their morals, and turbulent in their dispositions. The wants of society, it is observed, require some to be employed in the lowest and most degrading offices; and to what purpose, it is asked, would you improve the minds of those who can be happy only in proportion as their ideas are grovelling and unrefined?

Whatever truth there may be in such representations, arises from education being so uncommon among the lower orders, as to give some degree of elevation to those by whom it is possessed. In knowledge itself there is surely nothing that can injure the human character. It is difficult to conceive that instruction in moral duty should be unfavourable to virtue; that the opportunity and habit of comparing opinions should promote political or any other delusion; that acquirements common to all the inhabitants should inspire any one with self-conceit, or occasion that restless ambition, which, proposing to itself no attainable object, generates discontent, and leads to idleness and profligacy. It

is only when reading is an unusual accomplishment, that it can puff up weak minds with fancied consequence, prepare the way for constant mortification, and thus, rendering application to ordinary affairs irksome, become the bane of happiness. The people of Scotland, among whom reading and writing are very general acquirements, may surely challenge a comparison, for honesty, industry, and submission to the laws, with the more ignorant populace of other nations.

But if the simpler parts of education, reading, writing, and arithmetic, are not detrimental to morals, their general dissemination must be attended with the most desirable effects. The insuperable bar which now obstructs the progress of the lower orders being removed, an ardent desire of getting higher in the scale would pervade the nation, from which superior activity, diligence, and energy of mind, might confidently be predicted. Many who, without any extraordinary talents, are possessed of industry and judgment, would be enabled to advance themselves more rapidly to independence; while opportunities would be afforded to liveliness of parts, inventive genius, and comprehension of mind, to attract notice by their early indications, to develope themselves by study, and to raise their possessors to that eminence, which, in re-

warding their talents, would powerfully excite the emulation of others.

The benefits to individuals and society, that might be expected to result from the prevalence of such feelings and habits among the people, are beyond calculation. There are few, if any, occupations, in which useful improvements might not be expected from intelligent workmen; nor is there any limit to the new processes that might be discovered, the new employments for industry that might be introduced, the new channels of commerce that might be opened, if the great body of the people were accustomed to some degree of thought, and placed by early education in the road to wealth and honours. Even if reading should save a few hours from dissipation, by suggesting other and better sources of amusement, still more, if occasionally it might impress moral lessons on the heart, how amply would the expense of education, and the time employed in acquiring knowledge, be repaid to the people?

It is only the simplest parts of education, indeed, which ought to be indiscriminately extended to the whole of a nation. To those who must depend on daily labour for their subsistence, and are not likely to rise to any higher order in the state, instructions beyond reading, writing, and the easiest operations of arithmetic, would be superfluous, if not detrimental. But

if this degree of education were extended to all, such as showed superior abilities would be enabled to proceed, while the rest, though better qualified to understand and improve the ordinary arts of life, could have acquired no refinement of imagination or delicacy of feeling, to unfit them for daily labour. If there be any necessary employments so degrading in their own nature, that a man of plain sense, if taught to read, and informed of his duties and his rights, would turn from them with disgust, such offices would be left to those who ranked the lowest in intellect, till, by the improvement of machinery, other powers were substituted for the labour of man.

Taking it for granted, then, that some degree of instruction is good for the people, we proceed to enquire in what manner that degree of instruction can best be extended to all the citizens of the state.

If parents, in the lower ranks of life, had themselves received the benefit of a good education, or were in circumstances more favourable to the growth of family affection, all interference of the community would be unnecessary. But owing to excessive inequality of property, and the vices which it generates, workmen are too often exposed to the pressure of want, or the solicitations of vicious indulgence, to think of expending any part of their wages on that instruction for their children of which they cannot

estimate the value; nor can they always be induced to deny themselves the earnings of the premature and constant labour of infants, equally injurious to the future strength of the body and to the powers of the mind. The prudent think it necessary to provide as fast as possible against the day of sickness or adversity; the ambitious can brook no delay in the pursuit of their schemes for bettering their condition; and the profligate find the utmost exertions of all the family too little to provide for their extravagance and waste. Some regulations seem necessary to counteract these selfish propensities of parents, and to secure to the young such branches of education, as may enable them to prosper in the world, and become valuable members of society. To accomplish this, two objects must be attended to by the state; that the father should be induced or compelled to give proper education to his children; and that he should easily find the means of performing this duty.

Under a free government, there can be little difficulty in attaining the first object, without any great encroachment on the discretionary rights of parents. Where all measures of government are freely and openly canvassed, where the whole body of the people take a warm interest in public affairs, and each man is left to decide on the momentous subject of his religion among numerous and contending sects; in such circumstances,

the necessity of instruction must be so obvious, its value so universally felt, that the parent who grossly neglects the education of his child would be disgraced among his neighbours, and any child that had been so neglected would eagerly seize the earliest opportunity of making acquirements similar to those of his companions. Fortunately, by the late invaluable improvements in the mode of teaching, the easier and most useful branches of education may now be acquired in a very short time and at a very trifling expense.*

As a farther incitement, orphans and other children maintained at the public expense, ought to be carefully instructed, that their progress may operate as an example to others, and the shame of being surpassed by those who are in the lowest rank may stimulate the exertions of the rest of the people. This education indeed has been objected to, as inverting the order of society, raising children maintained by charity above the condition of the industrious, and turning to other professions those who seemed destined, by their circumstances, for the lowest employments. Such objections are illiberal, if it be meant that obstacles should be raised against

* Whatever may be the respective claims of Dr Bell and Mr Lancaster to the invention of this system, there can be no question that it was brought into practice solely through the able and zealous exertions of the latter.

the advancement of children whose parents were vicious or unfortunate; and they are groundless, if the education bestowed by the public is only what every industrious workman may and ought to procure for his family.

General emulation might easily be excited by public examinations, public rewards for proficiency, and public censure on such parents as had neglected the education of their children; and there would be no difficulty in procuring the occasional attendance, at those examinations, of people of a superior rank, well qualified to exercise this salutary censorship. The mere publication, from time to time, of the names of the best scholars, and of those of the parents whose children had been remarkably neglected, would be enough to ensure a reasonable degree of instruction to all the people. Such a publication could not be considered as an unjust infliction of punishment. It would only be a declaration of the truth, followed indeed by disgrace, but by disgrace arising entirely from the disapprobation in which the delinquency was held by the people. Of punishment springing necessarily from the sentiments of mankind, and consisting merely in the expression of these sentiments, no person can have any right to complain.

Should such motives be effectual, every direct control over parents in the management of their children ought to be avoided. But if experience

should prove that selfishness overpowered both parental affection and the sense of shame, some farther legislative provisions might become necessary for the interests of the children and the good of the state. The great object of such regulations would be to make instruction go hand in hand with the employment of youth. For this purpose, it might be provided, that no child under twelve years of age, unless an orphan, should be received into any manufactory, as an apprentice or otherwise, without being able to read; and that every child of a more advanced age, so employed, until he had acquired the prescribed branches of education, should be instructed during one of the ordinary working hours of each day. Public examinators should be appointed, without whose written certificate, no master should engage any child, or excuse him from attendance at school; and every violation of the law should be punishable by a heavy fine recoverable, for his own behoof, by any informer.

If, by these, or other regulations, a general desire for instruction could be diffused among the people, it can scarcely be feared that teachers, sufficiently qualified for the employment, would be wanting. To teach the simple branches of education necessary for every class of the people, requires no more ability than to excel in many trades; and there are few districts of a cultivated country, in which the inhabitants could not

easily maintain a schoolmaster, whose wages need not much exceed those of a mechanic. Even in a neighbourhood so thinly inhabited, that a sufficient number of scholars did not reside within a reasonable distance, it is by no means certain that any public interference or aid would be required. Some workman better educated, or, who thought himself better educated, than the rest, would easily be induced to dedicate part of his time to the instruction of youth. The demand, as in other cases, would lead some of the inhabitants to qualify themselves for this particular employment, and their remuneration would depend on the same principles by which the wages of all other descriptions of labour are regulated. It is never conceived to be necessary to assign a salary to a shoemaker, in order to induce him to reside in a particular district, even although the want of demand for shoes should force him, at particular times, or during part of each day, to have recourse to some other means of gaining his livelihood. Neither would there be occasion to give a salary to a schoolmaster, if a certain degree of knowledge were generally diffused among the people, and the demand for instruction had become as steady as that for shoes. No one dreams of giving public encouragement to a teacher of dancing, music, or drawing, although, in search of scholars, he may be obliged to change his residence every month: neither would itinerant

teachers of reading, writing, and arithmetic be wanting, if, amid a general desire for these acquirements, it could be conceived possible that stationary instructors should not arise. To teach is upon the whole a much more agreeable employment, than the greater part of manual labour. While it is more cleanly and less fatiguing, it flatters the desire of distinction, the love of sway, and many little vanities of the human heart. It would, therefore, draw some of the most intelligent from other trades, and it is to be feared only, that the great competition of teachers would so far reduce the rate of wages, as to render this, which ought to be a respectable profession, one of the least lucrative, and, therefore, to men of ambition, one of the least desirable, employments.

A late much respected writer seems to have fallen into an error, in ascribing the general diffusion of knowledge, by which Scotland is so honourably distinguished, to the establishment by law of parish-schools.* Had not the great body of the people been desirous of instruction, these schools would never have existed, or, if introduced by the patriotism of government, they must speedily have fallen into neglect. But the

* Currie's Life of Burns, and Dissertation. The same opinion seems to have been adopted by Dr Smith.—See Wealth of Nations, Book V. Chap. I. Part III. Art. 2d.

circumstances of the country, among which the state of religious opinions holds the first place, had produced a very general demand for education, which, if it had not been supplied by legal establishments, would soon have raised up private teachers in every parish.

The Reformation, in almost all the countries in which it finally prevailed, was encouraged and directed by the prince; but in Scotland it was altogether the measure of the people; not only discountenanced, but forcibly opposed, by the court. Scarcely had this great object been secured by the firmness and energy of the nation, when a new source of discord was opened by the attempt to introduce episcopacy, and to force it upon the people by a sanguinary persecution. In consequence of these attempts, Scotland, from the death of James V. in 1542, to the Revolution in 1688, was almost uninterruptedly the theatre of religious dissensions, and not unfrequently of religious wars.* During this period, the interest excited by religious disputes pervaded every class and description of the inhabitants, inspiring an eager and universal enquiry into the dogmas of the contending sects, which could not be satisfied without the perusal of controversial writings, the diligent study of the scriptures, and the comparison of various and opposite ex-

* See Laing's History of Scotland.

planations of what appeared to be decisive texts. It is to such studies, however much some of the points to which they referred may now be slighted as unimportant or unintelligible, that Scotland owes both the general diffusion of education among the lower classes of the people, and also the acuteness and sagacity for which her sons are noted. That education which the fathers enjoyed, and according to which they were respected by their neighbours, each was eager to extend to his children; nor till very lately had the progress of manufactures occasioned such a demand for premature labour, as threatened, had it not been counteracted by improvements in the system of teaching, to deprive Scotland of her pre-eminence in knowledge. *

Parish schools, then, do not seem requisite for the instruction of the people, though it cannot be denied, that, at a very trifling expense, † they may in some situations be productive of advantage. At any rate, they take away all excuse from such persons as may be negligent of the welfare of their children; and in a thinly peopled district, some small encouragement from the public may procure a schoolmaster of supe-

* See Millar's Hist. View of the Eng. Gov. Book III. Chap. I.

† The annual salary of all the parish school-masters in Scotland, is estimated by Dr Currie at only L.6139 sterling.

rior qualifications, to whom the fees of the scholars could not afford a sufficient maintenance. In this way, the necessity of having recourse to itinerant teachers, or to those who made their schools only a subsidiary employment, may occasionally be avoided, and masters may be procured, who, by greater experience, are better qualified to communicate instruction.

Under proper regulations, such schools do not seem liable to any great abuse. To guard against improper appointments, the salary ought to be so small that the maintenance of the teacher should depend chiefly on fees from his scholars; an easy and expeditious mode should be provided for removing those who were indolent or incapable; and, above all, the competition should be left entirely free to other teachers who might be inclined to reside in the parish. The very appointment by the public, and the salary annexed to the office, give the parish schoolmaster a considerable advantage over his rivals. This advantage would not of itself deter competition, if the teacher were deficient in talents or assiduity; but it is of great importance that no additional difficulty should be thrown in the way of a more able instructor.

II. Public encouragement seems not more essential to the cultivation of literature and the progress of science, than to the instruction of the people in the simple elements of knowledge. In a

highly polished society, the leisure enjoyed by a great proportion of the citizens necessarily creates a demand for amusements of various kinds, among which the pleasures of taste, and the investigations of philosophy, unless the latter should be checked by the timid jealousy of government, will always hold a distinguished rank. To many, such studies afford the most agreeable recreation, while the consideration and respect, paid by the wiser part of the community to mental attainments, must ever prove a sufficient spur to the industry of those who are conscious of talents for abstract research. Independently of all interference of government, a general knowledge of belles lettres, and some acquaintance with useful or amusing sciences, would be cultivated by the middle and upper ranks of society, as the best employment for leisure hours, and as furnishing conversation, varied, elegant, and instructive; while the higher and more difficult attainments of philosophy would be aspired to by those whose minds were peculiarly adapted to such enquiries, whose taste had been directed to intellectual pleasures, or who considered the discovery of truths interesting to man, as the surest and most tranquil road to fame.

If a general desire of instruction be thus almost inseparable from an advanced state of civilization, no danger can be apprehended of a want of teachers to communicate that instruction.

Literary men will always abound, who, with sufficient ability to understand the discoveries of others, possess not that original genius which extends the limits of human knowledge; and such persons are perhaps best qualified for the tuition of youth. Occasionally, too, students of the greatest promise find it advantageous to withdraw a few hours from their own advancement in science, and devote them to the instruction of others. The necessity of present maintenance will force some, the hopes of future patronage will induce others, to become private tutors or public lecturers, and however great the demand may be for instruction, that demand will be fully supplied.

Without public institutions, indeed, the same unvarying routine of education would not, as at present, be followed by all: the different sciences, would attract attention in proportion as they afforded amusement, improved the arts of life, or tended to strengthen the intellectual powers: antiquity would no longer lend support to error, or throw a venerable disguise over frivolity and jargon: nor would the attention of youth be withdrawn, by the almost exclusive study of languages, from the more important acquisitions of physical and moral science. All the evils in the present system of education have their origin in establishments formed in a rude and ignorant age, and were these establishments, which are no longer adapted to the present state of literature,

reformed or abolished, such abuses would quickly disappear. Not that the study of the Greek and Latin classics would ever be neglected; the admirable writings of the ancients preclude such a supposition; but the critical knowledge of these languages, like the higher attainments in other branches of literature, would be confined to a few whose taste directed them to such acquirements; while a more general acquaintance with their structure and beauties might improve the taste of the rest of the nation, without ingrossing, to the exclusion of every other ornamental accomplishment or useful study, the most valuable years of youth. Even if some of the most celebrated universities taught in a superior manner all that they pretend to teach, this would be a trifling compensation for the wrong direction which they give to education, and the consequent neglect of the most important sciences. Nothing but custom could reconcile us to the possibility of a studious young man leaving the university, ignorant of chemistry, natural history, modern belles lettres, the science of the human mind, the principles of politics, and the history of modern times.

But it seems probable that those establishments, which are at least unnecessary for inspiring a love of literature or providing the means of tuition, and directly prejudicial, by the routine which they introduce into the national educa-

tion, are, at the same time, ill adapted for securing to their pupils the best instruction in those branches of learning which they profess to cultivate. In whatever hands the appointment to vacant fellowships or chairs may be placed, it is much to be feared that literary eminence will neither be the sole, nor even the principal, recommendation of the successful candidate. Where the comparative merits of those who aspire to the office can be tried by no public standard, the field must be left open to private interest and political intrigue. It may happen that the relation or the dependant of a man in power should be in every respect qualified for the appointment, but much more frequently must imbecility be preferred to talents, half knowledge to learning, servility to elevation of mind.

Even if the most accomplished candidate were usually preferred, there could be no security for his executing with ability and diligence the duties of his trust. To learn and to teach are so different from each other, that he who has been most successful in the one, may be altogether unqualified for the other. It is a matter of daily experience, that many, whose scientific acquirements are undeniable, are altogether unable, in a clear and impressive manner, to communicate instruction; while others, proud of their acquirements, are too apt to consider the business of a teacher as unworthy of their exertions. To a

man of genius, the humble, though useful, task of explaining what is already known, is uninteresting, in comparison with the delight attendant on new discoveries; and to the ambitious, the reputation of a successful teacher seems unworthy of regard. The hours that ought to be devoted to the pupils are apt to be dedicated to private study, and the applause that is sought after is founded, not on lectures delivered to a few students, but on publications addressed to the world. In this way, notwithstanding their talents and acquirements, some professors will be unable, and others unwilling, to perform their duties.

The extent of this evil may be considered as, in general, commensurate with the salaries annexed to the several appointments. When these are inconsiderable, there is the best security, the interest of the teacher, that the instruction of youth will not be neglected. An unqualified candidate can have no desire to fill an office which to him would bring little emolument; nor would a person who, notwithstanding his acquirements, was deficient in the talent of conveying instruction, retain a situation which, in his hands, could be neither honourable nor lucrative. Those who occupied the chairs of a very moderately endowed university, finding their subsistence chiefly dependent on their fees, might

be expected to consider their school as the first object of their attention, and, in the view of increasing the number of their pupils, we might be assured, that they would use every exertion to gain the respect of the young men entrusted to their care, to command their attention, and to improve their minds.

On the other hand, salaries, when the chief fund of maintenance to the professors, in place of being merely premiums for abilities, and marks of public confidence, can hardly fail to relax exertion. He, for whom a sufficient income is provided by the public, will be disposed, partly from indolence, and partly from the irksomeness of year after year going over the same course of instructions, to gain his reward as easily as he can. He will either transform his office into a sinecure, trusting to the press for reputation; or, if the rules of the university and the system of public superintendance should prevent this abuse, he may be expected to deliver feeble and uninteresting lectures, to which, as little instruction can be expected, few students will resort.

With very moderate revenues, however, it is not improbable that universities may be of some advantage to the students. Masters, it is true, will always be found where there is a demand for instruction; but without some obvious attraction to particular places of residence, teachers of va-

rious sciences would be scattered over the country, instead of being brought together in a few universities. A young man who had acquired one branch of education would perhaps be obliged to remove to a distant part of the country, in order to be well instructed in another; and his whole attention would at each time be directed to only one line of study. It is well ascertained, that some variety of pursuits keeps the attention of the pupil more alive, and that nearly as great advances can be made in several simultaneous studies, as in any one of them to which his views might have been exclusively confined. This principle in some universities, indeed, is pushed so far, that a young man is perplexed by the multiplicity of his studies; but, within proper limits, attendance on several unconnected classes will be found both a saving of time, and a spur to exertion. The collection, too, of a number of literary men together is likely to have beneficial effects on the minds of the professors themselves; to stimulate their industry, to enlarge their views, and to counteract those narrow and illiberal prejudices which are apt to spring from exclusive attention to a single science.

The establishment of universities, if under proper regulations, would not secure the attendance of pupils on uninstructive lectures. The state ought merely to hold out such a premium as might render the university a desirable resi-

dence for a man of letters, but by no means to create any monopoly, or even any great preference of the professors over other teachers. Were this the case, every deficiency in the university would speedily be supplied by private lecturers, allured by the number of students collected together; and while this corrective was freely permitted, the mischief attending an improper selection of professors could not be very great. Accordingly, in the neighbourhood of the Scotish universities, when any professor is idle or incompetent, or when the number of students exceeds what can be properly taught as one class, private lecturers, fully qualified for the office, soon appear; and the knowledge that this will be the consequence of the slightest neglect of his duty, and that his income will suffer by the desertion of his class, for the most part ensures the utmost exertions of the professor.

Such private lecturers must always compete with the university under several disadvantages. However successful they may be in teaching, they can neither have the prospect of their rival giving up the competition, and leaving them in undisturbed possession of the field; nor can they, in ordinary cases, hope even to draw away the greater number of students from the regular professor. Many of the young men who resort from distant parts of the country, ignorant of the merits of the several lecturers, will be apt to

prefer him whose talents seem to be acknowledged by a public appointment, and the other professors who may be consulted will in general be inclined to support the university, against what they will consider as a dangerous rivalship, or an impertinent interference.

It is surely unnecessary to add any kind of exclusive privilege; the consequences of which may be to give a preference to imbecility over talents, to drive away private lecturers, however celebrated for their attainments, or to oblige the students to attend two courses of lectures on the same subject, one for form, and the other for instruction. To require an academical course of study, as the qualification for the exercise of what are called the learned professions, is evidently to create impolitic monopolies in favour of the universities. This is particularly absurd, if, as it sometimes happens, the sciences, on which the learned professions are founded, are either not taught at all, or so very imperfectly taught, at the university, that, without studying elsewhere, no person could be qualified to exercise those professions. But however well the requisite sciences may be taught, a residence at college, and the certificate of attendance on public lectures, are very questionable proofs of the attainments of a scholar. The best check on ignorant pretenders is probably to be found in

public neglect, and in its consequences, want of employment and poverty. If, however, some other test of the qualifications of a lawyer, physician, or divine, be thought desirable, it ought undoubtedly to consist in a rigid examination into the knowledge actually acquired, not in the production of a certificate, bearing only that the means of instruction had been enjoyed.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of Religious Establishments.

The performance of the various rites and ceremonies which are intended to propitiate the Deity, the preservation of a pure faith, and the religious instruction of the people, have usually been considered as objects of too important a nature to be left to the discretion or caprice of the inhabitants. That these duties may not be neglected, or true religion corrupted, a particular class or order of citizens has very generally been set apart for the performance of the clerical functions; and lest the attention of the priests should be distracted by a multiplicity of pursuits, or, from their engaging in the business of common life, the sanctity of their character should suffer in the estimation of the people, a fund has been established for their maintenance, either by the pious bequests of individuals, by endowments of lands belonging to the state, or by a compulsory contribution levied annually from the people.

Notwithstanding the very general prevalence of this practice, which may seem an argument of

its policy, it may be doubted whether it is defensible either on the principles of equity; or as conducive to purity of religion, and the diligent performance of the clerical functions; or as productive of any material benefit to the state.

I. That religion would subsist independently of public institution, cannot for a moment be doubted; for in every nation with which we are acquainted, except perhaps those in a state of barbarism, inconsistent with reflection, the sentiments on which it is founded universally prevail. Placed amid objects existing in a manner which he cannot comprehend, affected by events which he can neither foresee nor control, raised to-day to unlooked-for transport, and sunk to-morrow in as unexpected calamity, man, the alternate sport of hopes and fears, is led to ascribe all uncommon and striking events to the agency of superior beings, and to acknowledge his dependence on power and intelligence infinitely beyond his own conceptions. There seems little need for the interference of government to establish what is by nature so deeply rooted in the human heart; and if this interference be unnecessary, in so far as it abridges the right of private judgment, it is also unjust.

It is true, that this universal assent of mankind extends no farther than to the great fundamental truths of religion, the existence and chief attributes of the Deity. In other points, opinions

are as various as there are nations, or almost as there are men: but this diversity of religious belief, in place of being a reason for setting up and supporting any particular system by public authority, furnishes the most conclusive argument against every interference of the state.

Among the innumerable opinions prevailing in the same age and country, who shall ascertain the truth? The rulers of the state have neither the education which might enable them to judge of religious controversies, nor, amid their attention to the affairs of policy, can they have sufficient leisure to examine the dogmas and weigh the arguments of contending sects. The uninstructed partiality of the prince, the intrigues of his courtiers, or occasionally the wishes of a majority of the people, point out one system as most deserving of public favour; and the nation bestows lands or levies taxes to support what a great proportion of the contributors may detest as impious, or despise as absurd. This is not one of the cases in which the minority ought to acquiesce in the decision of the greater number, far less is it one in which the court, no better instructed, and sometimes more ignorant, than the people, should legislate for the nation. The question must be referred to the conscience of each individual, from which, in as far as he is concerned, there is no appeal. In suffering every man to adopt any

religious creed, and practise any ceremonies, he pleases, there is neither hardship nor injustice. The dissent and separation of some do not prevent the rest from performing whatever rites, and believing in whatever tenets, they think proper. But the being forced to contribute to a religion which is deemed erroneous, or foolish, is a real, and, to a pious mind, a very serious grievance. The nature of society requires that what, though useful to all, cannot be effectually done by voluntary association, should be executed by the state; but it never can justify an invasion of property, from which the contributor derives no possible advantage, which he considers most objectionable in its objects, and which is not necessary to the full enjoyment of any civil or religious privilege by the other members of the society.

Unless some infallible criterion of the true faith could be discovered, a conformity in tenets and ceremonies between different congregations is not even desirable. However opposite the dogmas may be, the objects of religion are the same; to propitiate the Deity, and reform the morals of the people. The separation into sects, so far from injuring, seems to have a direct tendency to forward, these objects. Setting aside direct revelation, no mode could be devised more likely to promote religious knowledge, and to discover the system of worship most consonant

to the will of God, than the division of the people into small societies, anxious to surpass each other in the success of their enquiries, the purity of their doctrines, and the fervency of their devotion. The same separation into sects is equally favourable to morals, by impressing on every individual the intimate connection between regularity in his own behaviour, and the honour of the religious society to which he belongs, and by establishing, in every sect, a vigilant censorship over the conduct of its members, founded on the conviction that virtuous behaviour is the most infallible test of purity of faith, and the surest road to public favour. Nor, unless it were fostered by the partiality of the magistrate, would this diversity of faith be productive of rancour or ill-will. On the contrary, each sect having no injustice to complain of, and perceiving that in some points its tenets agreed, and in others were at variance, with those adopted by the majority of the nation, might become less dogmatical in opinion, less exclusive in apportioning the divine favour, and less bigotted, without any diminution of righteous zeal.

Whether these expectations be well founded, the history of mankind may not have enabled us positively to decide; but it can scarcely be doubted that perfect freedom in religious opinions would add much to human happiness. Few grievances will be more deeply felt, especially

by the truly pious, than the being obliged to contribute, in any way whatever, to the prosperity and propagation of a false religion; and among the various and opposite tenets which contend for superiority, those adopted by the state must be charged by many of the inhabitants, and perhaps not unjustly, with folly and imposture. Each person believes implicitly in his own articles of faith, and ridicules or abhors those of his neighbour. If the dispute be important, to decide it, not by argument, but authority, must be oppressive: if it be frivolous, why should government interfere? The several sects which spring up, however much they may appear to diverge from each other, may be considered as following different roads, all leading, some more directly than others, to the same goal. By the guide-post set up by government, the people may be bewildered among bye-paths; and by the exactions of government many who are forced to repair a road on which they do not travel, are likely to be in some degree dispirited and disgusted with their journey. But let each man freely choose a path for himself, and though he may not always take that which is shortest or most level, that which passes through the most delightful country, or commands the most extensive prospects, he will at least proceed with alacrity and pleasure.

Even if it were supposed, in opposition to every known principle of human nature and every authentic record of the human race, that without public encouragement piety must decay, and religious observances be utterly forgotten; this would be no justification of the interference of the state. The consequences of such a revolution in the opinions of mankind, however calamitous to individuals, do not, at least directly, concern the government. The loss of the comforts of religion in this life, and of her rewards in a future state of existence, would indeed be greatly to be deplored; but government is not charged with the happiness of the citizens, farther than to protect them from injury, and secure to them the advantages of social combination. The welfare of each man, in all other respects, is best entrusted to his own care; and every attempt to force the people to receive comfort or delight from what appears to them productive of no such results, is equally futile and unjust. Were it possible that religion required the aid of establishments in order to maintain her influence in the world, that circumstance of itself would prove, that she had no solid foundation in the reason or sentiments of mankind. To perpetuate a system thus unsupported by its own evidence, would probably, in addition to the maintenance of the clergy, require that all free enquiry should be rigorously repressed; and

he who values most highly the blessings of true religion, may be allowed to doubt, whether bigotry or fanaticism, the only probable results of ignorance and persecution, would not be purchased too dearly by the degradation of the national character. Those who think that a religious system, thus destitute of hold in the human heart, and of proof to satisfy the human reason, should nevertheless be established and maintained by the state, are probably determined, not by any view of the private happiness which it is fitted to create, but by the expectation of some political consequences of very questionable utility.

Sanguinary persecutions intended to produce a uniformity of faith, are so contrary to the more enlightened philosophy of modern times, that it is very improbable they will ever be revived. The more moderate persecution, which consists in the exclusion of sectaries from offices of honour and emolument, is also in such discredit, that those, for whose private interests it is continued, are forced to plead for it, not on account of its tendency to make proselytes, but as necessary to the protection of the state from some public danger supposed to be inseparable from the proscribed opinions. But the endowments of the church are still defended on the ground of absolute right to that property, which has been destined, by the piety of individuals, or the munifi-

cence of princes, to the support of the national establishment. Where such funds have been provided, the maintenance of the clergy is said to occasion no public charge; and even what is drawn, in the way of tithe, from the farmer, is represented as only an apparent tax upon the people, every proprietor having purchased his estate, and every tenant having rented his farm, at a lower rate, on account of this charge. It is therefore contended, that the clergy are maintained from funds to which they, and they only, have an undisputed right; that no real contribution is levied on this account from the people; and, consequently, that the injustice of any person being compelled to support a religion of which he does not approve, is altogether a chimerical grievance.

This idea of an absolute right being vested in an open corporation, seems entirely groundless. Were the right of entering into this corporation restricted to a few, there would indeed be a just claim in these few to the maintenance of privileges, by which, in some way conceived to be advantageous to them, they were distinguished from other citizens. But when the right of entry is equal to all, the funds must be looked upon as public property, to be employed for whatever purposes the inhabitants, that is, all those who can pretend a right to those funds, may think most conducive to their good. The present incumbents have, it is true, an absolute right during

their lives, because by their appointment they were distinguished from the other citizens, and acquired a title to use and enjoy part of the public property which was at that time vested in the church. Those who are in the progress of clerical studies are also entitled to a compensation for the time which they may have employed in fitting themselves for an office, which only those educated in a particular manner could hold, and also perhaps for the disappointment of the plans they had laid for future subsistence and advancement: but if liberal compensation be made for these temporary claims, there neither does, nor can at any future time, exist any person who is at all aggrieved by the confiscation of the funds provided for the clergy; and that right must surely be of a very singular nature which may be violated without occasioning detriment to any one. To conceive rights vested in a church, or in any other abstraction, except in so far as real persons are affected by such rights, is an abuse of language. What is a right? that surely which cannot be violated without injury: and how can there be injury from which no individual suffers any manner of wrong?

Had the clergy received salaries from the state, however remote the date of the establishment might be, no idea of absolute right in the church to the continuation of those salaries could ever

have been imagined. When a civil office is no longer useful, every one allows that it should be abolished. At the time that some sinecures were done away by Mr Burke's bill, the measure, though disagreeable to many in parliament, was not opposed as an act of injustice. Compensation was very properly made to all those who had reason to expect their appointments for life; but nothing was heard of the injustice of depriving the board of trade, or the clerkship of the pells, of their patrimonial rights. Their title, however, to the salaries, was equally valid with that of the church to her lands and tithe; and if the doctrine of absolute right in open corporations be admitted, every office that is once created, however useless it may become, must, for the sake of justice, be continued to the end of time.

It will not be disputed by any person who acknowledges the right of the state to establish a particular system of religious faith and endow its ministers, that the doctrines or ceremonies, which have at one time been established, may at another be set aside by the legislature. Unless this be admitted, the introduction of the Reformation, and of the Christian Religion itself, must be reprobated as acts of aggravated injustice, by which the revenues of the establishment were not only withheld from their lawful proprietors, but conferred on those by whom that esta-

blishment had been overthrown. The present right of the church of England, on such a supposition, would remind us of that fabulous country, in which it has been said that the tenure of the crown consists in the murder of the late sovereign, all whose rights devolve, by law, on his assassin. But if the right of the legislature to alter church ceremonies and doctrines be admitted, it seems impossible to deny, that, by the same authority, all preferences may be set aside, and a system of perfect equality introduced among those sects, on any one of which, to the exclusion of the present system of religion, the whole of the revenues of the church might have been conferred. The greater power, it would seem, must of necessity include the less.

Few words can be necessary to prove that property, to which no individual can pretend a claim, must belong to the whole community, and be applicable to the general expenses of the state. It forms a fund, undivided indeed, but in which each man has an interest; and if it be misapplied, an injustice exactly of the same kind is committed, as if it were directly levied under the name of a tax. Were the church revenues directed to the public service, the amount of taxes raised in the nation might be diminished exactly in the same degree, and the part of his own property, which would remain to each person to expend, in the manner he thought most

conducive to his happiness, would, to the same extent, be increased. By the particular direction, therefore, that is given to this public fund, of which every citizen may be considered as having a share, those who belong to a different church are compelled to pay additional taxes, which if they are not directly, are not the less certainly, applied to the support of a religion of which they disapprove.

II. When a particular system of religion is supported by the state, there arises considerable difficulty in devising proper means of appointing the clergymen. Should the patronage be rendered private property, there can be no security for appointments, in which either the inclinations of the people, or the interests of religion, will be consulted. An office so important to private happiness and public tranquillity, as, in the opinion of the nation, to justify a public establishment, will, in most instances, be filled by the relation, the tutor, or perhaps the sycophant, of the patron. Occasionally, in spite of every prohibition, the presentation will be sold; and even when this abuse is checked, it will seldom happen that either the wishes or improvement of the people will be the only, or the principal, reason, for preferring the successful candidate. Patronage which, like other property, descends to heirs, must frequently be vested in those who disregard religion altogether, or, having adopt-

ed the tenets of a hostile sect, view that of the state as a gross profanation.

If the appointment be vested in government, it will be used, like all other patronage, as a mode of extending the political influence of men in power. The clerical office, sought after by political intrigue, will become the reward of courtly servility, the bribe of activity during an election, or the recompense for inculcating doctrines adverse to the liberty and happiness of mankind. The check which a regard for character might impose on a private individual will be impotent in restraining a minister of state, and, if there be no legal disqualification, unfitness for the office, whether from want of talents, of learning, or of morals, will be disregarded.

Of clergymen so appointed, some by their folly or vices, will bring the office into contempt; and even the most unexceptionable will have many prejudices to conquer, before their characters will be duly appreciated; before they can conciliate the esteem of their parishioners, without which it is in vain to expect improvement from their instructions. The first impression of the people will be unfavourable to a pastor, forced upon them without their own consent, and perhaps in opposition to their declared wishes. Until this prejudice be counteracted, some will attend religious ordinances, in a frame of mind that precludes all benefit; others will absent

themselves, and lose their habits of public devotion, while many, abandoning in disgust an establishment, in which such abuses seem to prevail, will join some of those sects whose prevalence is so unceasingly deplored by the church.

Nor would those evils be avoided by giving the right of election to the people. So much canvassing would take place at each vacancy, so many parties would be formed, so many jars and contentions arise, that the peace of the parish could not fail to be ruined, and the minority, amidst the violence of their passions, would constantly secede. "So small a matter as the appointment of a parish priest," says Dr Smith, in speaking of the popular election of the Calvinistic clergy, "occasioned almost always a violent "contest, not only in one parish, but in all the "neighbouring parishes, who seldom failed to "take part in the quarrel. When the parish "happened to be situated in a great city, it divided all the inhabitants into two parties; and "when that city happened either to constitute "itself a little republic, or to be the head and "capital of a little republic, as is the case with "many of the considerable cities in Switzerland "and Holland, every paltry dispute of this kind, "over and above exasperating the animosity of "all their other factions, threatened to leave be-

"hind it both a new schism in the church, and "a new faction in the state."*

Were there no establishment, the election of a pastor for a congregation, though it might occasion considerable keenness in that congregation, could scarcely be attended with any permanent evil. Those who were outvoted would have no injustice to complain of, no grievance, which, even to their own minds, could furnish an apology for rancour. Their opinion did not prevail; but they were not obliged in any manner to sacrifice their own sentiments to those of others. They were still at perfect liberty to withdraw their contributions, and reserve them for a preacher, whose character, doctrines, or discourses, they preferred. At the termination of such an election, with whatever violence it had been conducted, the angry passions might be expected to subside. The majority, and those from other sects who might be induced to join them, would proceed to settle on the clergyman, whom they had elected, such a salary as they could afford; while the minority would either acquiesce in a choice which they could not prevent, or quietly diffuse themselves among other congregations. Here there would be little room for animosity, none whatever for com-

* Wealth of Nations, Book V. Chap. I. Part III. Art. 3d.

plaint. If the majority disposed only of their own property, the greatest evil to be apprehended would be such a multiplication of congregations as might reduce too much the provision for each clergyman: and this evil, like the too great multiplication of lawyers or physicians, would speedily correct itself. In no case, could any portion of the people allege, that, in consequence of an appointment of which they disapproved, they had been unjustly subjected to the alternative of incurring additional and unnecessary expense, or of listening to the instructions of one by whom they expected to be misled, rather than enlightened.

It would require some very considerable superiority in the usual discharge of the clerical functions to compensate those evils which seem almost inseparable from every mode of appointing an established clergy; but in this respect also, the free elections of the pastor by those whom he is to instruct, and by whom he is to be paid, seems most consonant to the interests of religion.

Human indolence requires to be counteracted by opposite motives, among which the desire of independence and comfort will always hold the chief place. General regulations may enforce the customary performance of the services of religion, regard to character will usually secure some portion of study, love of fame may occa-

sionally give birth to very masterly discourses, and it would be most illiberal to deny that a sense of duty will frequently insure the most conscientious discharge of an important trust; but it is equally certain that, with a great proportion of mankind, self-interest is the most regular and powerful of motives. The public service, in spite of every regulation, may be performed in a slight and uninteresting manner; to avoid mere nonsense may shield the preacher from absolute contempt; the love of fame may aspire rather to the approbation of the learned than the improvement of the ignorant; the sense of duty may yield to the solicitations of pleasure, or may be swallowed up in indolent enjoyment: but he whose subsistence and comforts depend on his popularity will continue active and diligent; he will be desirous of suiting his discourses to the capacity of his audience, solicitous so to regulate his conduct as to secure affection and esteem, and, in the good or bad fortune of his congregation, anxious to approve himself their friend, their comforter, and their guide.

To assert that, with the view of recommending himself to the people, an unbeneficed clergyman will be apt to instil fanatical notions, and to follow, rather than direct, the faith of his congregation, is to suppose that there is some certain criterion of religious truth, and at the same time to overlook that pride of discovery, that

strength of conviction, and that desire of making proselytes, which, even if no allowance were made for the dictates of conscience, would lead an unfettered clergy to disseminate those tenets in which they themselves believed.

Amidst the varieties of religious belief, however, it would be presumptuous in any sect to assert that they only had access to the truth. The probability of falsehood in some tenets of every established church must be admitted, and the substitution of authority for argument can scarcely be expected to convince any sincere enquirer. The people, indeed, may be in error as well as the government, but the only effectual mode of reclaiming them is by free, unbiassed discussion, through which the mistakes on all sides may gradually be corrected. To appoint a person to preach to those who think his doctrines erroneous can have no other effect than that of driving the people from the church, or, if by any circumstances they are prevented from seceding, of depriving the exercise of public worship of every interest, comfort, and instruction.

It is undeniable that, under perfect freedom of enquiry, many wild speculations might, from time to time, be afloat; but the same freedom which gave them birth would speedily put an end to their existence. Neither in religion, nor in politics, nor indeed in any science whatever, is it possible to guard against ephemeral errors,

without at the same time barring the way to the most important truths: but such errors quickly pass away, while the truths, to the discovery of which they have frequently contributed, remain a real accession to human knowledge. Even the controversy to which they gave rise, by interesting the public mind, may detect, amid the conflict of opposite opinions, many errors, which, having prevailed for centuries, might have passed unquestioned, but for the keenness of research derived from collateral enquiries. By repressing investigation, as in many other modes, the operation of establishments seems necessarily adverse to the interests of pure religion.

Articles and confessions of faith, framed in a rude and ignorant age, have usually been handed down without alteration to times of much superior knowledge and improvement. They may in many respects be consonant to sound reason, but it is also highly probable that they will contain errors, which more accurate enquiries, and that spirit of liberality which grows with knowledge, would reject. It is to be expected, however, that, from the fear of innovation, which may be considered as the rooted malady of regular establishments, those dogmas which have once been adopted by the church will never afterwards undergo revision. The education of young clergymen will have a tendency to instil into their minds a bigotted attachment even to the most

problematical tenets; and well will it be for them if no circumstance during this education should lead them to harbour a doubt of the infallibility of the church. No situation can be more pitiable than that of a young man, who, towards the conclusion of his clerical studies, discovers what appear to be radical errors in the system which he is to teach and publicly to profess. If he avow his convictions, he must relinquish his hopes of preferment, and lose all the fruits of his previous studies. If he conceal them, and, by signing a test, assent to doctrines which he believes to be false, by whatever casuistry he may seek to hide the unworthiness of his conduct, by whatever examples he may hope to justify his practice, he must bid adieu, from that moment, to the proud feeling of conscious integrity.

Timidity, therefore, may be expected to characterise the investigations of the student, and the researches of an established clergy. Those who are set apart for the study of religion have a direct and powerful barrier raised up against their enquiries. If they examine the proofs of the dogmas which they profess, it must be under a bias very unfavourable to fair discussion; but those who are prudent will, in general, avoid a subject, in which every new discovery must be fatal to their peace of mind. What is it to them that the truths which they are first to display,

should in future ages command a general assent, if their immediate consequences to themselves be persecution and ruin? To set aside an order of citizens for enquiries, of which the result in very probable cases may be most disastrous to themselves, is, to say the least of it, a very singular mode of promoting the cause of truth.

Between relinquishing his living, and betraying his conscience, a clergyman, who is so unfortunate as to imbibe heterodox opinions, has scarcely any middle course. Concealment is almost equivalent to falsehood. By retaining his situation, he daily professes, by actions, if not by words, that his faith is that of the church; and in his public instructions, he is forced most sedulously to avoid topics which he may consider as intimately connected with the present conduct, and future happiness, of those whom he has undertaken to guide in the paths of virtue and religion.

Without establishments, no clergyman could feel the same repugnance to enquire into the doctrines of religion, or incur the same dangers by publicly avowing the result of his enquiries. Should he see occasion either to doubt the truth of some dogma which he had formerly admitted, or to believe in one which he formerly rejected, he might manfully acknowledge his conviction to the world. The liberality of a congregation attached to him by past services, and fully

convinced of his present sincerity, might lead them to overlook many differences between his opinions and their own : or, should he be disappointed in this hope, his confidence that truth must prevail, and that the arguments by which he had been convinced would operate the same conviction on the minds of others, would render him easy under the diminution of his congregation, in the full persuasion that this defection would speedily be compensated by new adherents. With clergymen, prepared by early study, freed from shackles of creeds and tests, and zealous both in investigating and proclaiming the truth, the most rapid advances in religious knowledge might justly be expected, and all errors, whether of recent date, or sanctified by long endurance, would quickly be swept away.

III. Religion has very commonly been viewed by statesmen, not so much as the means of propitiating the Deity, and securing happiness in a future state, as in the light of a convenient and powerful instrument for promoting the present interests of mankind. It has been represented as the friend of morality, the safeguard of private integrity, the protector of lawful authority, and the enemy of oppression. When human laws are unable to check the career of vice, when criminals elude the vigilance of the magistrate, or brave the justice of their country, it is desirable to call in the aid of religion, and

by her awful denunciations, to rouse a terror of punishment which no dexterity can escape, no favour can mitigate, no power can avert. The interference of government is conceived to be justified by the greatness of the object; for what can be of more importance to every individual, than the universal prevalence of opinions, so interwoven with the welfare of the citizens and the tranquillity of the state?

Those who are habitually under religious impressions will scarcely be satisfied to find, what they consider as of a value far above all sublunary things, thus transformed into a kind of supplement to the police. It is not to them that it is necessary to observe, that what is intended for the highest purposes can seldom with impunity be directed to one that is subordinate. True religion will, undoubtedly, fortify every virtue, and eradicate every vice; but we may be permitted to doubt, whether any considerable effect can be expected from ceremonies established by the magistrate, and frequented, from habit, from notions of propriety, or for the sake of example. Sentiments of terror may occasionally be excited by the powers of the preacher; but unless religion sink deep into the heart, it is to be feared that its terrors will quickly fade, amid the transactions of ordinary life, and that such fleeting fears of future punishment will prove a very weak and ineffectual antagonist to present temptation.

The human mind, it has already been observed,* is so constituted as to be powerfully affected by what is near in time and place, and by what is distinctly conceived; very faintly, by what is distant and obscure. Even certainty is but a slight compensation for that superior impression, which the near approach of the objects of our hopes and fears never fails to make upon our feelings, and through them upon our conduct. How often have we yielded to present temptation, even while we knew that we were preparing lasting regret? How frequently is the chief and most important object of life sacrificed to the solicitations of indolence, or to some caprice which almost at the very moment is despised? Hence the superior efficacy, in the view of example, of immediate punishment, which becomes as vivid in conception, and as much present to the minds of the people, as the advantages to be derived from the crime.

If human punishments, of which we may be considered as spectators, and which, under a well-regulated government, there could be little hope of eluding, none of braving, should be unable to restrain those passions which disturb society, it may be doubted whether denunciations of what is unseen and imperfectly conceived, of what is deferred to an undefined period, and to a

* Prel. Enquiry, Chap. I. Sec. III.

totally different state of existence, will have any very powerful effect. The punishment, indeed, is inevitable, but the want of precision in our idea of its mode, the obscurity that hangs over the nature of a future world, the expectation of long life, and the vague hope of the merits of repentance and future amendment, all conspire to weaken, if they do not destroy, the influence of religious denunciations over the human mind. The proper effects of piety seem to be to inspire virtuous sentiments, and to render men desirous of conforming in every thing to the will of the Deity; not to deter from crime by the fear of punishment. In this last respect, the influence of religion is probably much inferior to that of human laws.

However this may be, there can be no occasion for the interference of government, if, without any such interference, religious opinions might be expected to influence the conduct of mankind. All advantages to the state, springing from the terror of future punishment, would be ensured, at least in an equal degree, by the belief of the people in a state of retribution, as by the establishment of a church, from which many may be expected to secede. If experience has shown that what can be done by individuals, each for himself, is usually better done than by the government acting for all, this must be particularly true when the efficacy is entirely

dependent on individual conviction. Were there no established church, the emulation of rival sects, and the enquiries in which many would be engaged, before joining as members of any particular congregation, might excite a degree of religious fervency, very favourable to purity of conduct. This advantage, inestimable even in a temporal view, is not likely to be compensated by establishments, unless the public protection be thought requisite to the existence of religion in the mind of man. Such an opinion, no less degrading to religion, than it is contrary to reason and experience, even if it were well founded, could afford an argument only for forcing every inhabitant to contribute to the maintenance of whatever sect, in his opinion, professed the truth; but could be no justification of selecting and establishing any one of these sects as a national church. If the effect be produced, that mode of producing it, which interferes the least with private judgment, ought certainly to be preferred.

It may indeed be pretended, that government ought to watch over what is so intimately connected with the public interests; to see that the doctrines inculcated are favourable to morality, to take especial care that what is cherished as the auxiliary of virtue, may not be converted into her open enemy. Such care, however, is superfluous; for no sect teaching doctrines in-

consistent with morality, could long subsist. If fanaticism has sometimes deluged the earth with blood, it has been only when other passions than the love of truth were excited; when ambition imposed on the credulity of mankind, or previous persecution had raised theological disputes to frenzy. The impartiality of government would usually stifle such abuses in their birth, or the penalties of the law would restrain the crimes to which they might lead. In vain would be the attempt to extirpate evils of this nature by the purification of theological tenets, for in such tenets no symptom of their existence could be discovered. On a cursory view of the religious articles of particular sects, some dogmas may seem unfavourable to the interests of morality, but there must always be a mode of explaining away this apparent inconsistency, or the imposture would be manifest to the world, and the sect would speedily be extinct. Should some tenet have come down from high antiquity, which is absolutely incompatible with justice, we may be assured that it will be considered as a divine mystery, which, being altogether incomprehensible by our limited faculties, ought to have no influence whatever on our behaviour. Even the scandalous actions imputed to the gods of antiquity were never seriously conceived to be objects of imitation, or to alter in any respect the rules of moral conduct implanted in the human

breast; far less are speculative opinions on obscure, and usually unintelligible, points of doctrine, likely to interfere with the plain and impressive dictates of conscience. Examine the creed of any religious sect, and it will be apparent, that scarcely any of the dogmas have a connection, even the most remote, with human actions. A few, till the explanation is heard, may appear adverse to morality, and the very slight sanction and support given to those virtues which bind man to man, may at first occasion some surprise; but it will soon be recollected, that the recommendation of prudence, temperance, fortitude, benevolence, and justice, is common to all religions whatever, and that those tenets, in which all agree, cannot well become the distinctive dogmas of any particular sect.

In practice, the effect of religion in regulating behaviour will depend more on the character of the clergyman, than on the theological tenets which he may happen to embrace. If he be regular in his own conduct, and attentive to that of his parishioners; if in private life he be respected and beloved; if he can command the attention of his audience in the pulpit, and be anxious to give a moral tendency to his public instructions; it will be of little consequence to the state what opinions, on abstract or mystical subjects, he may profess. And fortunate it is that it should be so; for amid the variety of con-

flicting doctrines, it is very improbable that the magistrate should adopt the truth. Just as little probability is there, however, that he should select the clergyman best qualified to diffuse instruction; that a clergyman rendered independent of his congregation should be the most active in the discharge of his duty; or that the people should listen with reverence and improvement to a preacher appointed without their concurrence, and not unfrequently in opposition to their wishes. If religion be intended to regulate the affections, and to amend the lives of the people, it is of the utmost consequence they should be consulted in the appointment of the clergyman, through whose example and instructions they are to be awakened to piety and virtue. Should the choice of the people be unfortunate, they may be expected to correct their error whenever it becomes apparent to them. Nor is the deficiency of talents or learning, that may be feared in a clergy elected by the ignorant, so disadvantageous to the public interests, as the indolence, the unpopularity, and occasionally, the irregularities or vices, of those who gain admittance into an established church. Under popular election, the clergymen must at least be exemplary, or even rigid, in their manners, apparently fervent in their devotion, and capable of interesting the feelings and convincing the understandings of their congregations.

From these qualities, however, evils of another description have been apprehended. In consequence of their public instructions, their austere morals, and exemplary lives, an elective clergy are likely to acquire an influence over the people, which, it is feared, may be rendered prejudicial to the public peace. Not content with ecclesiastical disputes, they may turn their attention to public affairs; and that minister of state who disdains to court their support, or become subservient to their ambition, may find his measures thwarted, and his principles rendered odious, by an influence pervading every family in the kingdom. He does well therefore to court a power which he cannot safely defy, and, by establishing and paying an order of clergy appointed by himself, to render that his firm support, which might otherwise prove his destruction. If at variance with each other, the magistrate and clergy, by their dissensions, might embroil public affairs or endanger the state; united, they may bid defiance to all the arts of sedition, and safely brave the violence of civil commotion. Hence the alliance between church and state; an alliance which has so eminently contributed to the power and stability of both.

It can scarcely escape notice, that an influence which is represented as highly dangerous to the magistrate, is likely, when placed entirely under his direction, to become equally dangerous to

the liberties of the country. In spite of every precaution, there must be a constant tendency in the executive government to encroach on the more popular part of the constitution; and it would be difficult to contrive any machine better adapted to lull the constitutional jealousy of the people, to insinuate dangerous precedents under pretence of immediate good, to mitigate popular disgust, and, which is still more dangerous, to increase popular enthusiasm, than a national church, whose members owed their promotion to the favour of the court. If, by the sanctity of their character, and the importance of their functions, they are enabled, in a great measure, to lead public opinion, this surely is an argument for their being put into a situation for exercising this important influence with judgment and independence; without faction on the one hand, or base subserviency on the other. It is too much to expect from human nature, that he, whose hopes of present comfort and future splendour rest entirely on the favour of the court, should exercise a fair judgment in supporting what is right, and freely condemning what is wrong. He knows that it is his conduct upon trying occasions that must determine his preferment; and he sees around him men of enlightened and independent minds, left to languish in poverty and obscurity, while those of more pliant dispositions, more devoted to men in power, more ready to defend every public measure, and apologize for every abuse, are ad-

vanced to wealth and dignity. In such circumstances, an established clergy will strain every nerve to recommend themselves for preferment, and, if their influence over the people be as great as has been represented, they must become the most dangerous enemies to the liberties of their country.

It is perhaps impossible, under an establishment, to remove this subserviency to the court, without introducing still greater evils. To commit the power of church preferment to private individuals, might give rise to factions independent both of the crown, and the well-informed part of the nation. To vest it in the people, would be to raise up an ecclesiastical power, through the influence which the priests would acquire in the elections, highly dangerous to the state. But without any bond of connection between the various sects, to allow each congregation, by whom the expense was borne, to nominate its own instructor, as it could occasion neither faction nor disturbance, could lend improper support, neither to the administration, nor to those who disapproved of their principles and measures.

It is true, that where there is an establishment, sectaries will usually be found in opposition. Irritated by injustice, they are apt to extend a portion of their enmity from the church, to its ally, the state; and, in the hopes of procuring some

mitigation of their grievances, to welcome political change. In their dislike to the establishment, all the sects have a common object, which they are led to prosecute by combined measures, and this alliance between them may be extended by designing men to other enterprises. But were government, with strict impartiality, to afford protection to every system of faith, and peculiar favour to none, it is difficult to see what there could be in a multiplicity of religions dangerous on the one hand to liberty, or on the other to lawful authority. Each clergyman who took part in political discussions might be expected to act with the same independence as other men of letters; and there could be little danger, but, on the contrary, much safety, from the opinions of the people being in some measure led by men of liberal education and exemplary manners, whose profession excluded the expectation of private advantage from political faction. Forming no great corporation, but acting each according to his own convictions, there could be no interests of the church to warp their judgments, no jealousy of rival sects to be the motives of civil dissensions. Living among the people, they would both give and receive impressions in the ordinary intercourse of life; and the clergy, when thus independent of the crown, and unconnected with any party in the state, might perhaps be-

come the safest guide, and the most convenient organ, of public opinion.

If there must be an establishment, the least dangerous will be that, in which, from the equality of duty and emolument, no clergyman, from the day of his first appointment, can have an additional favour to solicit; and the most impolitic will be a hierarchy, in which every member, from the highest to the lowest, is kept in slavish subjection by the hope and desire of farther preferment. But in whatever way the clerical body may be constituted, some portion of influence, very dangerous from its nature, must be vested in the sovereign, in the most opulent citizens, or in the church; while the rancour of injured sects may sometimes occasion divisions or convulsions in the state. Abolish all establishments, leaving each man to choose his own faith, to select his own instructor, and to perform his religious services in the manner best suited to his inclination and circumstances, and all such political evils will instantly disappear.

The alliance between church and state has been highly extolled, without being very accurately defined. If no more be meant, than that the contracting parties should mutually support whatever is laudable in each other's doctrines or conduct, without stipulating for undue partiality, or indiscriminate approbation, this alliance

ought to be formed, not only between the church and the state, but between the latter and every description of religious sect; and the word alliance is misapplied to what, without any view to reciprocal advantage, is an obvious dictate of moral duty. If, on the other hand, it be intended that, in return for an exclusive provision from the public, the church is to support every administration, and to defend all their public measures, this famous alliance would be more justly characterised as a conspiracy against the civil and religious liberties of the nation.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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